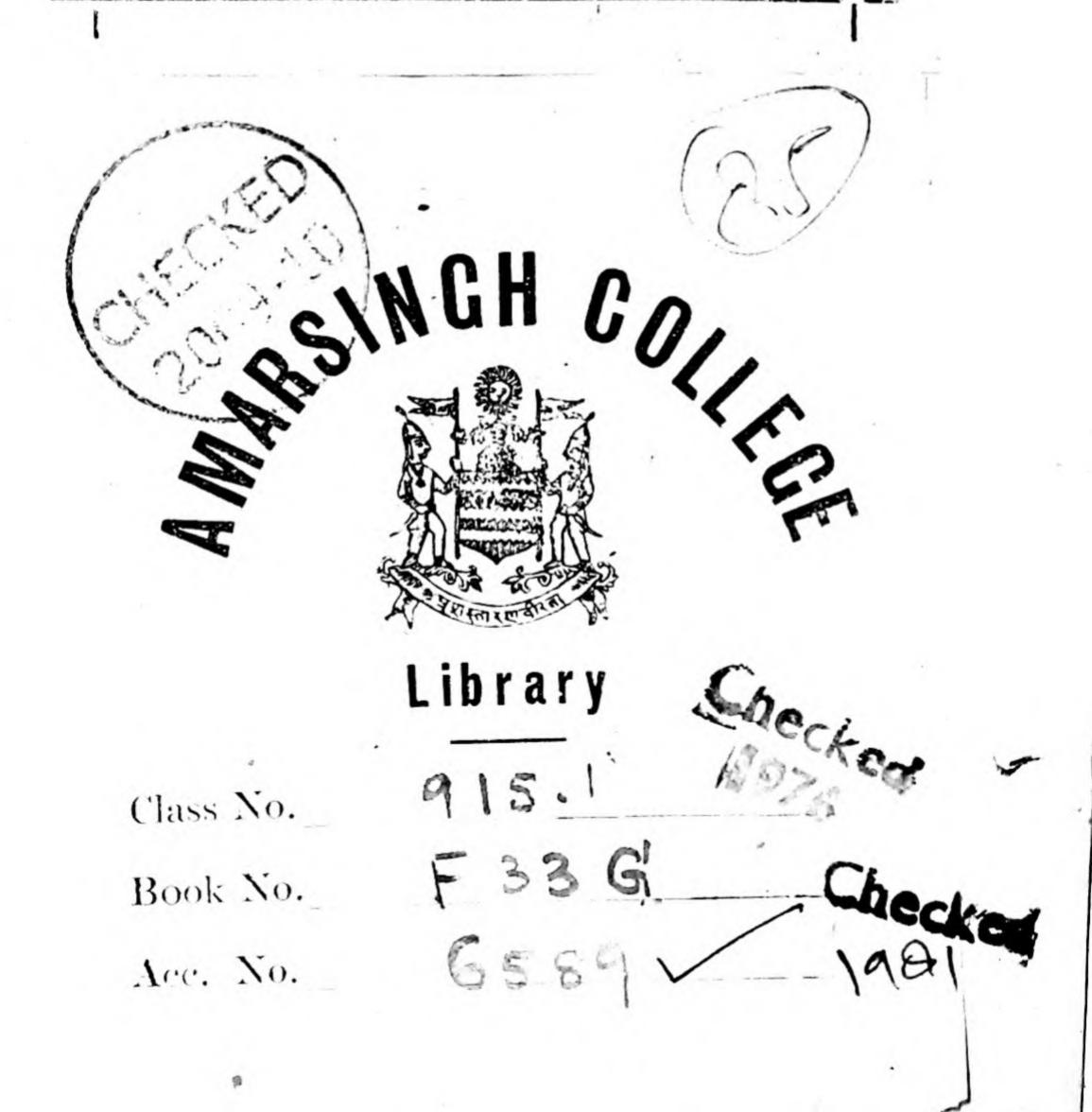


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GIVE BACK MY RIVERS AND HILLS!



By Innes Jackson CHINA ONLY YESTERDAY



Com Alt. or.

GIVE BACK MY RIVERS AND HILLS!

I.FENG

Translated from the Chinese
by
INNES JACKSON

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN on the 7th of July 1937 China found herself at war with Japan, the whole country seemed to wake from its long lethargy, and after a preliminary month of hesitation, when they may possibly have wondered whether this "incident" too would peter out and end in an inglorious truce, the Chinese people — worker and peasant, farmer and merchant, actor, poet, film-star and artist, journalist and dramatist, scholars, teachers, students, school childer, not to speak of the large regular armies and their leaders — began to muster for a gigantic life-or-death struggle. It was one of the most remarkable events in modern history, for in all the five thousand years of her existence China had never achieved such a unity.

And the spirit in which the Chinese now faced the aggressor was one not only of sturdy determination to fight to the end, but even of joyful liberation, of self-fulfilment. In going through the pages of this young soldier's narrative, the reader will find, not a love of fighting certainly, for this is quite alien to the Chinese mind, but an enthusiasm for the cause and for all the true soldierly qualities, a patriotic ardour so bold and bright that he may be reminded of the early years of our first Great War, and the mood of our poets and novelists in those days.

Life is colour and warmth and light, And a striving evermore for these, And he is dead who will not fight, And who dies fighting has increase.

The reason for this enthusiasm is not hard to explain. Since 1931, and even before, Japan had begun to spread her poisonous tentacles over the beloved soil of the Chinese people. With one sly move after another she

succeeded in occupying the huge territory of Manchuria and several of the North-eastern provinces. Peking, ancient home of the Chinese Emperors and one of the loveliest cities in the world, was largely dominated by the hated Japanese. Shoddy, mass-produced Japanese goods (I Feng complains about the wretched quality of the Japanese socks he had to wear in place of his worn-out, native-made ones) were pouring in through the occupied provinces and capturing the Chinese market. The people of the occupied towns and cities were being systematically doped, weakened and demoralised by Japanese-sponsored opium dens and brothels.

The students and intellectual classes in particular sometimes failed to appreciate their government's forbearance in keeping peace with Japan until their country should be strong enough to accept the challenge. Accordingly, when this challenge was at length taken up in 1937, and the Chinese government declared for "war to the finish", the people experienced the terrible joy of standing to arms after many years of frustration, and of coming face to face with the hated and dreadful enemy who had been creeping over their land.

The intellectuals, of whom our writer, I Feng, is one, were particularly thankful, since they realised the true significance of all these events, while the masses, as yet largely uneducated, had only a hazy conception of what it implied. However, they were at first discouraged from going on active service. Under China's Conscription Law of June 1933 (emended in March 1935) graduates of Senior Schools and University students were exempted from serving in the army, and the Minister of Education even looked with displeasure upon those thousands of students who continued to volunteer.

It must be realised that in China's population of some 450 millions, only something like 40,000 students are attending Universities, and also that the outcome of

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China's struggle depends not only on the strength of her armies, but on the speed with which she can build up her industries and educate her people; can transform herself, in fact, into a modern, progressive, world power. Supplies of man-power for the army are almost inexhaustible: well-trained intellectuals for the great work of reconstruction are few and precious.

The reader should not, therefore, feel any contempt for I Feng when, in his opening lines, he confesses "the only weapons I can handle are my pen and ink", or when, during the retreat from Hsüchou, on approaching a supposed enemy blockade, he expresses alarm and apprehension, having no gun to fight with. From the Chinese point of view, he is much to be admired. Instead of taking a safe post in the rear, a proceeding which would have had the sanction not only of his government, but of a long tradition (the old Chinese proverb says, "You don't take good iron to make nails, or good men to make soldiers"), he chose to share the hardships of the army at the front."

And what hardships they are! Without fighter protection, these soldiers are constantly open to enemy bombardment. To avoid heavy casualties, they have to march by night in all weathers. They seldom sleep in any comfort: a leaky roof, a stone pavement, no blanket in the cold of winter — these are the Chinese soldier's lot. When I Feng and his companions find a pile of damp straw to lie on one night, they think they are in Heaven! They have to depend for food and every other commodity upon the resources of the villages through which they pass. If their hosts are short through a bad harvest, the soldiers have to go hungry. At best, they seem to have

Towards the end of 1944, some years after I Feng's service with the 51st Army, the Chinese government changed its policy somewhat on this point. In order to inject some driving force into the armies in the field, the government appealed for 100,000 well-educated youths to enlist.

lived on a diet of fried pancakes and hot water. A dinner of fish or pork was such an outstanding event that I Feng records it with detail and relish.

When their shoes wear out, they have to walk barefoot, or try to find a pair in a village store, or capture some from the enemy. When winter comes on, the men have to sew their own padded cotton uniforms. When they are sick or wounded, they still have to march, or be carried on stretchers for days on end before getting medical attention. The dying Adjutant Li would have endured his last agony on a jolting wheelbarrow had I Feng not taken great pity upon him and procured a wooden door on which he could be carried more comfortably.

And medical supplies are always insufficient. The lack of X-ray and other elaborate surgical apparatus goes almost without saying, but even quinine is often unavailable to combat the malaria which is said to have killed nearly as many Chinese soldiers as the enemy's guns and bombs.

"Life in the army", the writer admits, "contains unimaginable hardships. But it includes also, from time to time, such enjoyment as a man could find nowhere else all his life long. The song of triumph, sung after a victorious battle, rest taken after the extreme fatigue of the march, the hearty dinner for a stomach aching from several days' starvation — such are the unsurpassable joys of our fighters in this war for freedom!"

The nature of I Feng's military duties may not be very clear to the English reader. At the time of the so-called Second Revolution of 1926, when Chiang Kai-shek (successor to Sun Yat-sen who fathered the First Revolution of 1911) drove with his armies over the whole of China, and defeated successively the contending war-lords who had done little but foster civil wars and their own petty ambitions, — at this time there were political

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workers in the army called "Tang T'ai Piao" ("Party Deputies") holding positions somewhat similar to those of the Political Commissars in the armies of Soviet Russia. There were then, and still are, only two Parties in China of any significance — the Kuomintang ("National People's Party") of which Chiang Kai-shek is Chairman, and the Communists. The Communist armies supported those of the Central Government, and the "Party Deputies" were either Kuomintang or Communist elements, appointed by their Party to be the spiritual guardians of the troops, and to teach them the Revolutionary doctrines, for the realisation of which they were supposed to be fighting.

Shortly after the Second Revolution had been completed, a split occurred between the Kuomintang and the Communists, and whether for this or other reasons, the "Party Deputies" no longer fulfilled the same mission,

even if their appointments continued to exist.

At the outbreak of the present Sino-Japanese war, many young intellectuals like I Feng, ardently desiring to take an active part in the defence of their country, volunteered for some job in the army, and were given work suited to their experience and talents. Even if they were Party members (i.e. of the Kuomintang) they were certainly not officially despatched by the Party, as are the Russian political workers. They were young patriots anxious to serve in the front lines. Some of them wrote despatches, others did liaison work, many were employed in spreading propaganda among the country people, lecturing them upon the meaning of the war - for they are mostly unable to read and know very little about affairs outside their own village - or organising them for guerrilla defence. I Feng's chief work, as the reader will discover, was the examination of Chinese traitors and enemy prisoners.

These new political workers were mostly very young men, and at first inexperienced. They were only given

small commissions and a low rank. On the other hand, since they were "intellectuals", they were treated with special courtesy by the High Command, in accordance with China's age-old tradition of respect for learning.

From later writings of his, we know that I Feng subsequently threw away his pen and ink, and joined the guerrilla fighters in his own province of Shantung.

I Feng joined the army in the November following the outbreak of hostilities, and his story covers a period of about a year till the winter of 1938. The military operations which he describes took place in the five North-eastern and Central provinces of Shantung, Kiangsu, Honan, Hupei and Anhwei, and they were of the utmost significance to the future development of the war. It may be helpful here to explain briefly the strategic importance of the various cities and districts mentioned, and to show how the military events fit into the pattern of the war as a whole.

In a country of such unimaginably great dimensions as China, railways and navigable waterways are bound to be of the utmost importance to the combatants. In the early stages of their invasion of China, the Japanese fought almost entirely along the main railways and rivers, and even when they had occupied the towns and cities on the borders of these "life lines", the surrounding country remained, and still remains, hostile, militant and "Chinese". For the purposes of this book it is only necessary to visualise a few railways and a few features of physical geography in North-eastern and East Central China.

Starting from Peking (Peiping) in the extreme north, one important railway line runs south to Hankow on the Yangtze river (the Ping-Han railway) and continues to Canton in the extreme south of China. A second important line runs from Peking to Nanking, also on the

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Yangtze. (This is called the Tsin-Pu railway, an abbreviation of Tientsin-Pukow. Tientsin is the most important station on its northern stretch, and Pukow is the junction at Nanking.) Running transversely from west to east of the country, and terminating at Tung-hai, is the Lung-hai railway. Where it crosses the Ping-Han line, there is the strategically important town of Chengchou, and where it meets the Tsin-Pu line, there is the vital junction of Hsüchou, about which we hear a good deal in I Feng's narrative.

China's two greatest rivers, the Yellow river and the Yangtze, both flowing west and east, are included in the area. About the Yangtze we hear little, except on the occasion of I Feng's visit to Hankow, but the Yellow river comes within the area of active operations. Of special interest is the city of Chinan, where the Yellow river is met by the Tsin-Pu railway. Here a branch line (the Chiao-chi railway) runs eastwards to the sea, terminating at Tsingtao, I Feng's home town, and whence he sets out to join the army at the beginning of his story.

The operations described here are mainly confined to the Tsingtao-Chinan-Hsüchou-Tung-hai square, bordered by sections of the Chiao-chi, Tsin-Pu, Lung-hai railways and the sea; and to the Hsüchou-Chengchou-Hankow-Nanking rectangle, similarly bordered by sections of the Lung-hai, Ping-Han, Tsin-Pu railways and the Yangtze river. In the square lie the Tai mountains; in the rectangle the mountains of Ta-pieh—"the Great Farewell"—which play an important part in the story.

Now let us turn to the operations themselves, and observe how they fit into the general development of the war. Before the actual outbreak of hostilities, Japanese garrisons had already been stationed, by forced agreements, in the vicinity of Peking. They were therefore able speedily to occupy the city and from there to make simultaneous thrusts along the main railways. Advancing

down the Peking-Hankow railway, with the object of taking Hankow, they reached the northern bank of the Yellow river within a few months. On the southern bank lay the much-coveted town and railway junction of Chengchou. But here the Chinese put up a stubborn resistance, and after seven years of war the Japanese have still been unable to cross the river and seize the town.

In their simultaneous advance down the Peking-Nanking line, the Japanese, helped by the treachery of the provincial governor of Shantung, occupied Chinan in the fifth month of the war, and began to press on towards the railway junction of Hsüchou. This is where our narrative begins. In the first chapter we read how I Feng and his companions heard of the "evacuation" of Chinan and the fall of Nanking (taken, of course, from the east by enemy forces proceeding up the Yangtze from Shanghai). They were ordered to protect Hsüchou, which was now threatened from north and south. Marching by road from Chiaotung, where they received the news, to Hsinan, a town on the Peking-Nanking railway, they proceeded by train to Pangpu on the southern bank of the Huai river, which formed a natural defence for Hsüchou.

The enemy had meanwhile, after occupying Nanking, proceeded up the railway to Mingkuang (about sixty miles north of Nanking). As this threat developed, I Feng describes how part of his army withdrew to the northern bank of the Huai, and the battle which ensued. These prolonged and successful engagements between Mingkuang and Pangpu enabled the Chinese forces protecting Hsüchou from the north to inflict two heavy defeats on the enemy advancing from Chinan—at Lini and Taierchuang in March and April of 1938. Astonishing as it is, these were the first great defeats the Japanese army had suffered for a thousand years, since the Chinese victories in Korea during the T'ang period. It is not surprising

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that Taierchuang has become one of the most glorious names in Chinese history.

In Chapter II we read how the enemy was bringing up reinforcements from the north-east, and how I Feng's division was sent back into Shantung to protect Taierchuang from the north. The Second Battle of Taierchuang developed (Chapter III), and although the Chinese armies were successfully holding their ground, the order came in the middle of May to withdraw from the area. It appears that the enemy was pouring in additional reinforcements both from north and south, and to avoid the loss of several armies by encirclement, the High Command had ordered the evacuation of Hsüchou. The main Chinese garrisons fell back westwards in good order along the Lung-hai railway to check the Japanese advance before the vital junction of Chengchou, and thus protect Hankow - the enemy's next important target. Other Chinese forces, including those in our narrative, withdrew in various directions behind the Japanese lines, to wage organised guerrilla warfare. The retreat of I Feng's Division was made south-west from Taierchuang in Southern Shantung, through Northern Kiangsu and Anhwei and Southern Honan towards the Ta-pieh mountains. The significance of this move becomes clear when we examine the enemy's plan of advance.

With the fall of Hsüchou, the Japanese had completed their occupation of the whole Tsin-Pu railway, and were free to make the attack on Hankow, China's war-time capital after the loss of Nanking. Two columns advanced westwards from their Nanking-Shanghai bases, along both banks of the Yangtze river. A third column, after capturing Hsüchou, advanced south-west with the intention of crossing the Ta-pieh ranges, and taking Hankow from the rear. This Hannibal-like scheme failed, but it was against these forces that I Feng's Division was ordered to operate. In Chapter XI we read of fierce

engagements among the mountains, and of how the enemy tried to take the peaks by storm or — so it seemed — to raze them to the ground with his artillery.

The Japanese had hitherto refrained from attacking South China, which was supposed to lie within the British and French "sphere of influence". But after the disastrous Munich Pact had been signed in September 1938, they took the hint, and making a surprise landing at Bias Bay, seized Canton. Hankow, already hard pressed from the east, was now unable to receive reinforcements from the south. On October 25th the Chinese garrison evacuated Hankow. The withdrawal was carried out according to plan and was in itself a success. A large part of the army withdrew to the Ta-pieh mountains, where they formed a permanent menace to the enemy in Hankow.

In Chapter XII, I Feng records this news, and also that his army had been ordered to leave the mountains and proceed to the protection of Western Anhwei. Finally they had orders to fight their way back to Shantung, there to organise guerrilla warfare behind the enemy lines.

The evacuation of Hankow brought to an end the first stage of the war. For the first fifteen months the strategy of the Japanese High Command had been to force the main Chinese armies into decisive battles, and to annihilate them on the field. The Chinese strategy, however, was, in Churchill's words, "to fight everywhere and be fought nowhere". With her lack of planes, tanks and mechanised equipment of all sorts, China never expected to hold the great cities, and never intended to fight large pitched battles in places chosen by the enemy. The centre of Chinese resistance having been moved to Chungking in mountainous Szechwan, where "dogs bark at the strange sight of the sun which seldom rises above the eastern peaks", the fall of Nanking and Hankow were of no great military significance. And the Chinese armies seemed to

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melt away before the disappointed eyes of the enemy.

A Chinese fairy story tells of a magic monkey ¹ called Sun Wu-kung, who when fighting a formidable enemy would pull from his body "ten thousand hairs", blow upon them with his magic breath and transform them into ten thousand monkeys. Each of the ten thousand fought with the strength of Sun Wu-kung himself, but if one of them happened to be knocked down by the enemy, it became only a monkey hair lying in the dust. The Japanese expeditionary forces in China have found themselves fighting such a "monkey-hair" warfare.

In the second stage of the war, the Chinese abandoned "positional warfare" for what they called "consolidating warfare", in preparation for the real, general offensive which would thrust the invader back into the sea. In this stage the main armies are being held in reserve, while mobile armies are sent out everywhere to harass the enemy, and organised guerrilla tactics are adopted on a vast scale. This change of strategy is

already observable in I Feng's story.

The original text of this book first appeared, in instalment form, in a widely-read Chinese magazine, Yu Chou Feng—"Wind of the Universe"— (edited by Mr. Tao Kang-teh: Shanghai and Hong-Kong) Nos. 94-113. It went under the title of "Hsü Yu Sui Chun Chi"—"With the Army on the Hsüchou and Honan Fronts". The title I have adopted here is the translation of a Chinese war slogan.

It is not a diary in the usual sense of the term. That is, it is not a daily record of events, and only two or three dates are mentioned in the whole text. And certainly it is no "War Journal", concerned only with the progress of the fighting and the issue of battles. Rather it is a

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¹ Monkey. Translated by Arthur Waley. (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.)

personal record of life in the Chinese army, made by a feeling and sensitive mind. With admirable self-effacement, I Feng brings us a powerful picture of China's fighting spirit during a very critical phase of her life-ordeath struggle. He also shows, better than any war correspondent would have done, the human background of the soldier's daily life, the lovely scenery of his native land, and the simple, genuine hearts of the Chinese country-people.

I have made a few cuts in the text. Sometimes I omitted phrases which seemed redundant in English, and this may be called "translator's licence". But in other places I have cut out a few paragraphs which seemed to me unlikely to interest a Western reader, and in these cases I have indicated the omission by a series of dots. The last two chapters, describing the army's return to guerrilla bases in Shantung, I have dropped altogether. They contained no outstanding events, and convey to the English reader, unfamiliar with the terrain, only a hazy picture.

But nowhere does the writer reach a climax or "end", and he could not, since this is not fiction but history, and the war goes on. If he still lives, it is quite possible that somewhere in the enemy's rear, and in the respites from martial activity, the guerrilla fighter I Feng is still jotting down his impressions with the precious fountain-pen sold him (in Chapter VIII) by the pretty and persuasive Hankow shop-girl.

I. J.

Chapter I

On the March to Hsüchou

I

NOVEMBER 10th in the 26th year of the Chinese Republic ¹ is the memorable day when I joined our War of Resistance! That day I took a train from Tsingtao to Chiaohsien, and called on Divisional Commander Mou of the 114th Division of the 51st Army stationed there. Luckily he was able to give me some work.

I have little military knowledge and no experience. Even in the army the only weapons I can handle are my

pen and ink.

Divisional Headquarters had been set up in a large building, the ancient hall being transformed into our Staff Office. The doors had disappeared and a white linen sheet hung across in their stead. A chilly winter wind swirled in. My two hands grew numb, icy, hampering my work.

Night fell. A candle was lit and flickered timidly as if it would gutter out. In the cavernous hall it glimmered like a star that peers from the dome of Heaven far and wide over the open fields. My straw pallet had been so crushed under the weight of its previous owner that, as I lay back, my body seemed to roll down into a sort of den! . . .

On the evening of the 14th I was sent by train to Chinan, and arrived at eight the next morning. I walked out of the Chiao-chi station to find a city of solitude. There were but rare passers-by, only frequent bands of armed soldiers; and the doors of shops and houses were shut tight. The old Chinan had vanished! The city was held in the tension of approaching battle.

¹ I.e. 1937. The Republic was founded in 1911.

I hired a ricksha which brought me to another station—on the Tientsin-Pukow line. As I arrived, ten prospective passengers rushed helter-skelter towards a pine grove, as if in search of shelter. My ricksha man too, on getting his fare, fled with his vehicle under the eaves of a near-by homestead.

I was puzzled by their behaviour; neither could I find any attendant at the ticket-office or luggage room: both were as still as tombs. At last I found a few of the Staff in the station-master's office, talking together with uneasy and preoccupied expressions. They told me an air raid warning had just sounded, and as we spoke the "Danger" signal was given.

The thunder of anti-aircraft guns, mingled with the explosive roar of bombs, seemed to come from the direction of Lokou — fifteen li 1 away. Not even the shadow of a plane crossed us.

My mission completed, I decided to catch the night train to Chiaohsien. When I reached the station at 6 o'clock the place was already thronged with waiting passengers. The huge entrance yard was packed like a mass meeting. The air was brittle, and a dull clamour rose from the crowd — signs of war-time uneasiness.

The platform gates were shut, and my friend had to guide me through a narrow passage outside the station. To my surprise, I found the train already at the platform, with passengers packed into it like bundles of merchandise. There was not a single space to stand on, even along the footboards. With my military pass, a seat was found for me in the guard's van.

Some of the crowd outside tried to climb over the iron railings on to the platform. They had to pay two Chinese dollars 2 to the men on whose knees or shoulders they clambered.

² A dollar at that time was worth about a shilling.

¹ A li or Chinese mile is about a third of an English mile.

On the March to Hsüchou

On my return to Chiaohsien, the Divisional Commander ordered me to proceed to Lungkou and Huanghsien for liaison and intelligence purposes. Just as I was making my preparations, there was a sudden alarm. Coastal garrisons reported that two enemy submarines had been sighted off the port of Tsingtao. However, they turned out to be a couple of whales with their spouts jutting several tens of feet into the air! This became one of our standing jokes.

2

It was rumoured that enemy troops had crossed the Yellow river and occupied a village. Orders to march came in at Headquarters. Our Staff was busily working out plans, while preparations proceeded briskly in every department of the army.

The march began at 3 A.M. on December 1st. I had

not been able to sleep all night.

At three, it is still deep night. The quivering bugle-call grated on our ears and we streamed towards the rallying-ground. Not a star pierced the curtain of darkness, and a north-east wind blew urgently. Our column in marching order was like a long serpent.

Once more the bugles rang out, and the troops moved forward. The sturdy, bold and dauntless figure of Commander Mou passed us, and the rest of the Staff

followed him up.

Now the wind began to gather a more furious force. Snowflakes tumbled against our faces like petals, turned to drops of water and immediately froze. But none of us noticed the iron cold of that winter night: our hearts were on fire to meet the enemy!

On reaching Chu, our army cut through the outskirts, but I with some companions turned aside into the walled town. It was a prosperous sight. Business went on briskly, especially in the restaurants which, even at that

early hour, were already thronged. Who could have imagined that a bare fortnight later the place would be turned into a vast slaughter-house, and the war would have swept away all that beauty, like leaves withered by frost after the benign warmth of summer?

We did not reach the second station of Chikou until after dark, when the oil lamps glimmered in the villages. With our weariness from the day's march, and the warm earthen k'ang 1 to lie on, we had a specially deep, delicious

sleep that night. . . .

At first we were lucky: for several days we did not hear a single air raid warning. But as we proceeded towards the town of Tsaohsien we were suddenly overtaken by enemy planes. Fortunately we had taken precautions: our men were marching in very loose formation. Calmly we dispersed to cover - some in the fields, some in the pine groves round the villagers' family tombs, and some under a viaduct on the main road. The planes failed to spot us and roared off towards the southeastern horizon.

Sweating and congratulating ourselves, we pushed on. But after stopping for some hours in the house of a rich landlord - a boy of twelve who had recently lost his father - we decided to make another night march to

avoid bombing. At three we moved off.

Moon and stars gleamed across the fields, perfectly pure and white. The ground was coated thickly with glittering frost. The road seemed to stretch far, far away, trod by the lonely feet of soldiers on the march. I looked back in the direction of my home, and my heart went out to my Min, cut off on that island: 2 when should we come together again?

² The writer's sweetheart was stranded at Shanghai, presumably in the

The k'ang is a form of bed, common in the country districts of North China. It is a raised earthen platform warmed from below by a primitive method of "central heating", hot air flowing into it through a pipe from the cooking stove.



On the March to Hsüchou

As dawn broke, we saw the first rays of daylight burst from the eastern horizon, pallid like the belly of a fish. Over the awakening fields a morning glow lit up the spreading mists. The scarlet ball of the sun rose gradually serene and radiating a many-coloured light, until the mist stealthily withdrew. A tatter of blood-red cloud sailed across, covering the sun. Beautiful beyond words was that winter morning!

Breathing in the pure air, we were at once refreshed and forgot our weariness. On we tramped until the town

of Tsaohsien appeared over the horizon.

Divisional Headquarters were set up on the southern outskirts, at a village called Yuchia, which lies only a few hundred yards from the west bank of the river Ni. The clear river water gave an indefinable charm to the village scene.

I made it a rule to rise every morning at five. Then I would sprint along the river-bank as far as a small coppice where I rested and filled my lungs deeply with the morning air. The river here was quite shallow, and the water being so clean, one could count the fishes darting hither and thither. Wild swans would be sleeping on the sandy shore. I often startled them and they would whirr up, crying harshly. Yet as they spread their white wings in the glowing mists of dawn, and whirled with utter freedom into the fresh air, I could not help envying them. They were luckier than we men, enduring slaughter and bitter pain.

Now and again on those lovely winter mornings I would catch the notes of bold marching songs - the singing of our men after their morning drill. Even some of the uneducated country lads learnt to sing "Strike, thou great sword, on the heads of those devils!" . . .

By despatches from Army Headquarters, we learnt

International Settlement, which was like being on an island, surrounded by the hostile sea of Japanese soldiery.

that on all fronts fierce battles were in progress. Nanking was lost and Chinan evacuated. We were all furious at the news, and the rank and file were particularly impatient, wishing to be ordered to the front immediately, and to come to grips with the enemy.

3

Time moves fast. We enjoyed a fortnight's leisure in the safety of the Chiaotung region, but the fearful storm which had broken over our generation was sweeping on, and showed no sign of abating. Each one of us was pre-

pared to play his part in the huge conflict.

Marching orders were issued — to an unrevealed destination — and we were to advance by night to avoid observation. Each day when we encamped we were visited by enemy reconnaissance planes: they hovered over us and flew off again. Thanks to our discipline and the effectiveness of our camouflage, they never spotted us. The villagers were convinced our General had the protection of spirits!

Once we entered a village named "Fountain Head" after a hot spring that had been found there. The water was extraordinarily warm. It flowed into a pond built on the village outskirts and enclosed by a low wall. Despite the winter, it was not at all cold bathing there, and I had just stripped off my clothes and stepped into the open basin — when the siren sounded. Immediately

we spotted enemy planes overhead!

The pond was packed with soldiers, and we were not allowed to make the least movement. We just stood there in the water, waiting for whatever fate held in store. Fortunately the "All clear" rang out almost at once: we had passed through yet another ordeal in safety.

Arriving at Lini, we camped in a place called "Peach Blossom Garden", some twelve or thirteen li outside the

On the March to Hsüchou

town. Next morning, just as my friend Liu and I were buying two pears from a fruit pedlar beside a shrine to the "God of Earth", and before we had time to set our teeth into the fruit, enemy planes were over us again. We threw ourselves down on the hillside and, enjoying our pears, watched the planes crossing and recrossing, banking and diving. There were six of them and they bombed the town in turn.

Suddenly one of them dropped a bomb only a short distance from where we lay. I could see it clearly—shaped like a huge cigar—as it crashed down. A deafening explosion tore the air. Then a column of black smoke belched upwards tens of feet and blotted out half the sky. For the first time in my life I realised the power of a plane and a bomb!

Anti-aircraft guns from our Headquarters and some machine-guns made an effective reply. One of the planes was hit and made off hastily with a trail of white smoke curling up from its tail.

From Lini we advanced to the village of Li on the river I. A small fleet of boats lay at anchor by the riverside, for in peace-time this had been a centre of land and water communications, and trade had been very brisk.

I was billeted in a shop which had closed down since the war. The shopkeeper himself lived in some rooms behind. He was old and deaf, and would not listen, much less hear, unless one spoke in tones of thunder.

I managed to borrow from him an earthenware tub. My feet were leaden and blistered from the long march, and I wanted to bathe them. Unfortunately I leaned too heavily on the tub and broke it to pieces.

My landlady was kindness itself. "Never mind about it," she told me, "I'll find you another." And she refused so stubbornly to accept any compensation that I was at length forced to explain in all earnestness,

"If you don't take my money, it will come to the ears

of my superior officer, and he will have me shot!"

Only thus could I persuade her to accept it. The tub, she demurred, wasn't worth a ten-cent piece. I gave her two. It was not too much, I explained, seeing that she was old and would have a long way to walk to buy a new one.

She beamed with gratitude and at once disappeared, returning with a bowl of hot maize congee for me. I thanked her with a full heart. I remembered my mother who had loved me so much in my boyhood. To my misfortune, I had been left an orphan in my early teens. Now I could no longer even visit my parents' graves. . . .

4

We marched to Yencheng, and thence to a place called "Port of Red Flowers", to arrive at the northern boundary of Kiangsu province. On reaching the railway at Hsinan, we were to entrain for Hsüchou.

A distance of seventy *li* separates Yencheng from Hsinan as the crow flies, but by road it is ten *li* farther. Marching by night, we suffered particularly when we stopped to rest, and our sweat, profuse from long exertion, froze stiff on our bodies. Frost flowers gathered on our coats and hardened to ice, glinting in the starlight and moonlight — glittering, sparkling and gleaming. Yet we were so exhausted that we had no fear of the damp ground. We would just drop down where we stood and fall asleep.

As we approached Hsinan, we could see from far off the scattered twinkling lamp-lights of the cottages gleamng faintly out of the town's huge black pall. Several of

us raised a cheer, "We're really there!"

We had marched fast and my feet were blistered again. Luckily Hsinan was an important centre, and there were two public baths. The proprietors, realising that they

On the March to Hsüchou

could make a lot of money out of the troops, had got up in the middle of the night to boil hot water for us. I was glad this time that I had no dealings with an earthenware tub!

After my bath, I pierced the blisters on my feet with a very fine needle, and pressed out the pus. Then, according to instructions, I put a drop of kerosene on each pinprick, presumably to kill any germs. On the march next day I was free from the least discomfort. This was a remedy known to everyone in the army, and proved completely effective.

Dawn broke, and at once the main thoroughfare became alive with every sort of activity. All the shop-keepers bestirred themselves to serve the newcomers. Cooked noodles and boiled dumplings appeared everywhere—a sign of prosperity brought about by the

frequent passage of troops.

It was actually New Year's Day — the twenty-seventh "new year" of the Republic. We had so exhausted ourselves with marching that we had almost forgotten to celebrate. Although at this time of grave national danger we ought to make our festivities as simple as possible, this was no occasion like a private marriage, the formalities of which could be completed by simply putting a notice in the newspaper. The celebration of New Year is a communal affair in which all must participate. As every member of the Division had received his pay for the preceding month, we all contributed to the grand total of some tens of dollars, buying with it wine and some special delicacies to eat. We were busy all morning with the preparations, and disposed of our feast with gusto.

In the afternoon we moved off again. Trains had been despatched for us from Supply Headquarters, and were standing in readiness at the station.

The sun was setting. We all gathered on the platform

and queued up before the trains assigned to us. Compared with the third-class passenger trains in which we had formerly travelled, these military trains were like Purgatory after Paradise! They were simply open wagons with steel floors. As I squatted on the metal I lost all feeling in my feet. Even the officers had only a shabbily-roofed train, with a bare, broken-down bench to sit on.

The trains moved off, and as they put on speed so did the storm beat on us more fiercely. Our fur-lined greatcoats were no protection, and we had to huddle closely against one another. The cold tore at our skin and our

damp breath turned to ice on the tips of our noses.

When the trains came to a halt at Hsüchou we were almost unable to move. I struggled with all my might and at last managed to stumble out of the train. I went to the congee-seller on the platform and bought a bowl of "congee of eight jewels" for three coppers. After eating it I once more felt the warmth slowly seeping through my body.

Chapter II

The Battle of the Huai River

I

THE trains steamed out of Hsüchou and travelled south to Pangpu, our final destination. The enemy had meanwhile advanced northwards from Pukow (the railway junction of Nanking) and occupied Mingkuang. This move brought Pangpu into the war zone, and I and my colleagues were quickly despatched to Huai Pass, to mobilise and organise the people for partisan warfare. We worked strenuously day after day.

At first enemy planes bombed the place continually, until we had orders to move our Headquarters to a village on the northern bank of the Huai river. This river formed a natural outer defence line for Hsüchou, and the enemy had failed in frequent attempts to cross it. But still he did not abandon his plan to attack the city. Every day he continued to shell our positions north of the river, and to bombard us from the air.

On New Year's Eve (by the old calendar 1) he launched a fierce attack on us on the northern bank. From dawn till nightfall, and from nightfall till the following dawn, his guns pounded us at random. The curved path of the shells from his densely-firing batteries glared ruddily in the darkness, formed into innumerable coloured arcs, and vanished far off into the night like shooting stars. We were so disturbed by the crash of guns and the angry rattle of machine-guns that none of us attempted to sleep. We

I Formerly the Chinese had a Lunar calendar. New Year's Day was the 1st day of the 1st moon, and the date consequently varied. Since the founding of the Republic, the Western calendar has been officially adopted, but in the country districts the old festival is still celebrated, the letting off of fire-crackers forming part of the proceedings.

went outside the village and sat about in the open fields, enjoying the sight, and pretending that these were only the explosions of fire-crackers in celebration of the Spring Festival!

The enemy tried to force the river with his gunboats, but had to withdraw before the machine-gun fire of our garrisons. One report after another came through by telephone from the Staff Department, now announcing the sinking of some enemy motor-boats, now detailing their casualties. We were all beside ourselves with excitement. Eventually the enemy's whole fleet of motor gunboats was wiped out. They tried to ferry across on boats seized from the local people, but again failed. As a last desperate resort, they packed their men into wooden coffins, protected with sandbags, and floated them stealthily towards us. But these coffin-boats were even easier targets for our guns. Thousands of enemy bodies were soon drifting on the surface of the river. The water almost stopped flowing, and it had turned a bright crimson with the invaders' blood!

A Chinese proverb, warning people to keep away from trouble-making friends, says: "If the city gate catches fire, the fish in the ponds beneath will be scorched". It was only a metaphor, but now, in the battle of the Huai river, the fish in those waters were actually burnt to death. Many huge fish, each weighing several tens of pounds, were blown to pieces by machine-gun bullets or the explosion of hand grenades. Thousands of dead fish floated by, entangled in the bodies of enemy soldiers.

Oh, the bones washed ashore by the waters of the River Indefinite,

Still remain the girl's beloved vision as she dreams in her boudoir in spring-time!

Young Japanese girls, did you too dream of your loved ones on the shores of the Huai river?

By good fortune our own reinforcements arrived in time, and we threw ourselves upon the invader in tough hand-to-hand fighting. The village of Little Pangpu, and several others to the north of Huai Pass, changed hands three times or more. All the villages along the river-bank had gone up in flames and were no more than smoking rubble. We wiped out about a thousand enemy troops and captured a hundred prisoners.

Under our stubborn pressure the enemy once more retreated to the southern bank, leaving behind numerous rounds of shells and quantities of ammunition and weapons of every sort. These were the best presents they could

have given us for the Spring Festival season!

2

After this serious set-back the enemy's plan to advance northwards was temporarily abandoned. We took advantage of the lull to regroup our forces and replace casualties. The war-scarred inhabitants had a temporary respite too, and could enjoy the pleasures of spring. My old landlady smoothed her wrinkled brows and asked me happily, "Won't the devils 1 come back again?"

"No, they wouldn't dare," I smiled back at her. "Don't be afraid. As long as our army defends this bank,

no devil will ferry across."

At this her much-wrinkled face broke once more into a beam of thankfulness.

The standard of living among peasant families in these northern districts of Anhwei is a very low one. The soil for the most part is poor and the crops meagre. The numerous tributary streams which carve the countryside

In ancient history, the barbaric tribesmen who invaded China from the north-west (ancestors of the Hsiung-nu) were opprobriously called "Devils" or "Demons". In the present war the Chinese term of "Devil" for "Japanese" is comparable with our use of "Hun" for "German ?.

into a huge chess-board are often in flood, bringing ruin on many families.

Sesame seeds form the chief local product, and the cooking oil made from them is extraordinarily delicious and cheap in these parts. A catty ¹ of oil costs only ten cents. The food and clothing of the local inhabitants are of the utmost simplicity and frugality. A cotton-padded coat has to last for two generations, and is handed down from grandfather to grandson! Their diet is made up of coarse pancakes and congee. They rarely touch unglutinous rice or white flour from one year's end to the other: they may buy the latter, perhaps, once a year to make some boiled dumplings and bread for the New Year's Eve celebrations.

As a rule their cottages are without open courtyards, and sometimes one even sees a horse, a donkey, an ox, a sheep or a pig straying into the living-rooms. At the simple shrine in the central room these peasants often pay reverence to a strip of paper on which are written the words: "Heaven, Earth, Emperor, Parents and Schoolmaster". Those who are a little more up-to-date have substituted "Fatherland" for "Emperor"!

There is no general education here. The sons of the

rich are sent away to schools in the towns.

But country life is always lovely. In the tender springtime every living thing seems to discard its grey wintry coat, and to flatter the eyes with its fresh and graceful

beauty.

Less than two *li* to the north from our Headquarters lay the river Kuai, where I spent most of my free time after work. On the bluish ripples of the water three or four fishermen's boats were usually sailing, slowly and leisurely, while thousands of squabbling ducks swam in the shallows: their quacking and squawking could be heard from a distance.

The equivalent of 22 oz.

The pale-green willows lining both banks of the river had shot out their golden-brown and pliant twigs. Woods of peach-blossom here and there were flaunting their exquisite rosy-coloured buds, seducing the mind of the wanderer like attractive young girls. The spring breeze skimmed my languid cheeks, bringing me pleasure and consolation. The songs of little wild-birds soothed my longing.

Sometimes I would throw myself on my back beside the river, and gaze up at the floating clouds that moved lightly across the sky and passed slowly out of sight. The great expanse of heaven stretched in an all-embracing span, meeting at the horizon's rim the boundless blue water of spring-time. If only I could be like one of those clouds, floating to the edge of the world, so that I could visit the one I loved on that distant island surrounded by the Eastern Sea!

The twilight would come on. Then a swift wind sprang up from the land. The weather was changing.

My heart was deeply moved.

My work here was always simple. It was to enquire after and examine cases of Fifth Column activity. I was left with plenty of time to study, but I had not brought a single book with me and it was extremely difficult to borrow any reading matter from the villagers. Once I even decided to take a train to the near-by towns of Hsüchou and Suhsien in the hope of buying some good books.

Food supplies for the army were plentiful and easily From Suhsien we could get all kinds of vegetables and sauces. Best of all, the fishermen on the Kuai river brought us in each morning an abundance of every sort of fish. For a change, there were always newlaid eggs to be had. We could buy ten hen eggs or about seven or eight duck eggs for a ten-cent piece. I would eat four or five eggs every day, cooking them in boiling water.

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In spite of it I was not growing fat. I kept particularly fit, thanks to the running exercise which I took every morning. This was really the golden age in my military career. . . .

As we were stationed here for quite a long time, we began to make friends with the villagers. Sometimes we persuaded them to learn more Chinese characters. Two orderlies serving in our military court would teach them to read from a pamphlet specially compiled for war conditions. This was another of my most enjoyable occupations after work.

The village children, boys as well as girls, began to learn songs about the War of Resistance. They were quick and intelligent, and these rousing songs uttered by their little mouths became more moving then ever. I poured scorn on those educationists who think the children

of peasant families are difficult to teach.

3

As soon as enemy forces occupied the town of Huaiyuan they began to organise a Fifth Column by means of bribery in order to spy out our military secrets. The first two of these unwilling traitors who voluntarily reported to us had been despatched together by the Japanese. One was called Ma and the other Huang, and both were natives of Huaiyuan. The following was the confession they made:

Before the enemy occupation of the town they had sent their families away to places of safety, staying behind themselves to look after their property. They were unable to escape in time before the town fell, but their lives were spared for the curious reason that they were found worshipping tablets of Buddha, and were burning incense in his honour.

Both had enemy soldiers billeted on them whom they judged to be Japanese officers. Under their threats Ma

and Huang contrived to appear obedient, while trying to

keep out of their way as much as possible.

As time went on, hosts and guests seemed to be getting on well with one another, and the devils began to trust the sincerity of the two men. It was decided to send them on an important mission — to spy out our military secrets.

On the orders being given, the two men stood speechless and aghast. The devils, seeing that they made no response, flew into a rage, so that they had outwardly to agree to their new mission, at the same time knowing in their own hearts what they would do.

From his pocket one of the officers took out a thick bundle of ming-chao, and gave it to the two men with a sneer. "Well," he said, "off you go! You've been generously paid!"

They dared neither laugh nor be angry, but tried to

appear attentive.

The devils did not trust them completely: several of their "bestial soldiers" were sent along as escort. As they walked towards the enemy's outposts, they passed a ruined cottage kept by an old man. The devils went in to find out what he was doing there, but speaking different languages as they did, neither he nor they could understand a word. The devils then lost their temper and began to beat the old man, whereupon Ma and Huang seized their chance and slipped away unnoticed. For a long time they heard the victim's shrieks, and finally the sound of a rifle-shot. He had evidently been finished off.

Ma and Huang ran straight towards our sniper patrols and gave themselves up. They were loyal Chinese, they declared, and would never return to the enemy. I myself observed them very closely and gave them a thorough cross-examination. I could swear to the truth of their

Artificial paper money which the Chinese burn at the ceremony of paying reverence to their ancestors. The smoke from it, as it fades into the air, is thought to be received by the spirits as real money in the other world.

story. They also told me about enemy atrocities in the

town of Huaiyuan.

Besides looting and burning from end to end of the town, the devils violated the women. The prying-out of "flowery girls" was their chief occupation. An old woman living at the east gate had not escaped in time, and several of her neighbours had also concealed themselves in her house. During their wanderings in search of "flowery girls" some of the devils happened to walk in, and they were sadly disappointed at finding an old woman of nearly sixty. They were beasts in the true sense. In the presence of the old woman's male neighbours, they forced her to strip off her trousers. One of them peeped mockingly between her legs, and they all clapped their hands to applaud him, and then drifted away.

Living in the same street as themselves, continued Ma and Huang, was the family of a carpenter, including his beautiful wife. They did not escape in time. The devils took possession of the wife: the husband disappeared

for ever.

I made a report of these facts to General Mou, our divisional commander, asking him to give employment to my informants. Mou consented and we detailed the two men to work in a sniper corps. They knew the locality well and spoke with a local accent. They could work as spies with little risk of discovery by the enemy.

Another involuntary spy who reported to us was an old man of seventy-two. As soon as he reached our lines and encountered our patrol, he confessed that the devils had sent him over. Old as he was, he had a lively spirit, and spoke in a clear, loud voice as he gave a fluent

description of his experiences. . . .

The enemy tried to make use of the old people, but they were as patriotic as the young, and staunchly refused to be made their tool. After making his report, this old man

Prostitutes.

expressed his determination not to return to Pangpu whence he had come. He would like us to send him back to his native town of Fuyang. I gave the full report to General Mou, who, in order to encourage the old man's patriotism, gave him ten dollars from his own pocket and sent him back to his home town.

A party organised by the teachers of Suhsien paid a visit to our Headquarters. They presented us with a banner and comforts of various sorts, and prepared to entertain us with some plays and songs. There were about forty of them altogether, men and women, all in military uniform, and carrying their own kit with everything they needed. They marched smartly and sang with good voices. Young and vigorous in spirits, they broke into a tuneful refrain as they marched up our village street amid our cheers and applause.

Divisional Commander Mou himself acted as host. We dined together, but as there was not a dining-table to be had in the village (a few old tables had already been commandeered by the Staff for their office desks), we decided to make a picnic of it. We had liberal helpings of meat and huge pieces of bread for our meal. Immedi-

ately afterwards, the performance began.

All the soldiers of the battalions and companies belonging to our Division and stationed in the neighbourhood were invited to attend. The villagers were also invited: this was a rare chance of entertainment for them.

The village, long given up to tranquillity and solitariness, was suddenly astir with life. On an open space just outside, a fine though simple stage was erected, and decorated with numerous slogans on coloured posters and paper flowers. The audience of peasants and soldiers crowded in and half filled the great field. Less

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Before the plays began we all joined in patriotic songs, by which the emotions of all of us were strongly roused. The best plays were the one called Lay Down Your Whip and the last — Our Blood Flows on the Bridge of Lukouchiao. The acting was quite excellent, and each play performed and every song sung deeply touched the hearts of the onlookers. Some were wiping tears from their cheeks. The whole was a fine inspiration to our soldiers who were fighting a war for freedom.

5

The news of our great victory at Taierchuang spread like wildfire over the countryside, and the people celebrated with violent enthusiasm. This was the first glorious record in our war of resistance. An artillery battalion from our Division, which had taken part in the battle, came marching back to us in triumph, singing exultantly.

Some ten days later information was received that the enemy was sending reinforcements from the Tsingtao area, and that he was attacking from the direction of Ihsien with four divisions. On April 18th we were given the order to march back to Shantung. We were all thrilled and excited at the news. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon we gathered at the railway station of Jen Bridge. All the elders and the heads of the villages and towns within a

radius of ten li came to see us off. . . .

I went to a small restaurant near the station and ordered a bowl of boiled dumplings, but before I had time to swallow them down, the bugle sounded and the train had come in. I put down 20 cents for my dumplings and ran hastily with my friend Tsui to the station. All the luggage and equipment had been rapidly and neatly loaded up, and before the second warning of the bugles had died out, the train had already slid away from the

platforms. To the creaking symphony of the train wheels,

Jen Bridge station disappeared from our sight.

The trains arrived at Hsüchou in the depths of night, but the whole town was ablaze with the glitter of electric lamps. It had been heavily bombed, but in spite of this seemed more prosperous than ever before. This war zone was under the supreme command of General Li Tsungjen, whose wise strategy and calm decisions had seriously hampered the enemy's plan for attacking Greater Hsüchou.

Our military trains were passing the little Lung-hai railway on the way to the battle-ground of Taierchuang, and made no halt at Hsüchou. We just sat in the armoured compartments as if in a tin can. As soon as we had steamed out of Hsüchou station, the iron doors were tightly shut and we were left in a dense darkness.

6

In a kind of trance I heard the shouts of our soldiers, "Get out of the train!" I stirred drowsily from my dream to find we had already stopped. Under the moonlight, a desolate night scene unrolled itself. We were at the northern station of Taierchuang after the famous battle.

The roaring of distant guns could be heard as soon as we left the train. It was a deep and heavy sound, shattering the calm of the night. A setting moon hung aslant in the vast expanse of sky. A sprinkling of morning stars still lingered here and there, winking their bright eyes and peeping down from an immeasurable height at the present tragedy being played out on earth — the merciless slaughter of human beings!

Taierchuang! Ruins and wreckage after the fight! The scene dazzled our eyes and thrilled our hearts. The stench of blood blew towards us with the night wind and almost suffocated us.

After a long wait, we caught sight of a railway official. They all worked in underground rooms, and few could be found in the usual offices. The man told me that when the great battle raged, a two-storey building near the booking-office was still standing. There General Pai Chung-hai had his quarters and from that building directed the great army of tens of thousands in their counter-attacks. It had been the constant target of enemy planes, but amid the intense bombing the general remained firm and calm, watching the progress of the battle through his glasses with almost superhuman resolution.

Then the railway official led some of us to the back of the building to see the wreckage of an enemy plane. This was one of their transport machines which had landed about eight *li* away from the station at a place called "Lake of the Liu Family". One of our own men had volunteered to attack it. Groping his way towards the machine in the dark, he found the guards had fallen fast asleep! He set fire to it at leisure and watched it blaze, until only this steely skeleton was left. He returned to his camp in safety and received the reward of a hundred Chinese dollars.

At the northern end of the railway station were four enemy tanks, captured by our men. As soon as we heard of them we rushed off to have a look. They were like clumsy iron oxen, and as they lay there they seemed like four stiffened corpses. They were to be despatched to Hankow for exhibition as war trophies.

We left Taierchuang station when the faint rays of dawn were slowly appearing in the east. As we marched down a long street, now in utter confusion and strewn with wreckage, we began to imagine the battle scenes which had been played out over these stones.

There were still some food shops selling yu tiao 1 and

¹ Sticks of fried batter made from wheat flour.

congees. They were the best things we found to eat in the mornings during our march. The inhabitants were delighted to see their own soldiers again. They breathed once more the atmosphere of freedom.

We marched along the Tai-wei motor road, and before we had advanced far we began to see, on the right side of the road, the bodies of those staunch fighters who had stood firm till death that their country might live. Their

loyal bodies were still unburied.

These heroic men had never thought of yielding ground. At every point on the road, and in every small man-hole, one of our comrades lay dead. They had died in defiant attitudes, and they still aimed imaginary weapons at the enemy. Their skin had been exposed to the sun and was turning dark brown and purple. Their faces glared with fierce expressions; their glazed eyes were opened wide. They lay there still with their fists stretched out or their feet raised, as if waiting for the enemy to approach, and for the grapple of hand-to-hand fighting.

Oh brave, heroic souls! I keep your memory in my warm heart and blood. In my prayers I can tell you of our great victory at Taierchuang, and that will comfort

you!

Ahead of us we could see innumerable tracks of tankwheels, criss-crossing and cutting up the fields and open land into a chess-board. It was not hard to imagine how

fiercely the battle had raged in this sector.

On the fields and field-paths we could pick out the bodies of enemy soldiers, distinguishing them by their uniforms. Here and there we found some still-smouldering ashes and some fragments of skulls and limbs. Such were the trophies of those aggressive people who planned to conquer China. Would the enemy dare now to give any true reports to his expectant people? The pitiful Japanese, cheated by their high-handed war-lords, were still dreaming of victory.

In the small trenches we saw numbers of large leather shoes, arranged in pairs and very regularly laid out. The

stories they told left one much to think about.

Within the radius of a hundred *li* not a single village had been left intact, and the stench in them was such that no one dared approach. Besides the foul smell of burnt enemy corpses, there were carcasses of Japanese horses lying about everywhere. Not the shadow of a single living thing was to be seen — not even a solitary dog: only the putrefying bodies of men and horses which the very vultures and wild dogs refused to taste.

The spring was advancing and growing warm. After

the horrors of battle, plagues were sure to follow.

Green grass and wild flowers straggled everywhere. Blades of rye and vegetable sprouts were shooting up all

over the fields. No one tended them. . . .

We had planned to pass the night in the village of Shaochuang, but as we marched in, we found that all the cottages had been burnt to the ground. In front of the village, some ten or more enemy horses were lying dead, their stomachs putrefying. We also found a number of shells two feet long, abandoned by the devils. They told the story of a sound beating and a disorderly retreat.

Orders came down the line: "Plan changed. Forward march!" We had no idea where we should eventually find quarters for the night. Before we had gone far, however, news came from our advance guard that a village called "Great Yellow" would be available

for us.

Field after field by the wayside was thickly scarred with shell-holes. In one deep pit the earth itself had been scorched — black and dull red. By the side of other pits lay mangled heaps of limbs and bodies. Whether these had once been Chinese or Japanese fighters, their lives had equally been sacrificed to the insensate power-lust of the Japanese war-lords. Now they were only solitary

ghosts, far from their own homes or their native land. . . .

When we arrived at the village "Great Yellow", we found that luckily quite a number of partly-wrecked buildings were still standing. In one of them we saw an old peasant lying asleep. He had no bed but had spread some grass over the ground to lie on. We woke him up and he was very startled to find soldiers standing round him again.

"Your own men. Don't be afraid!" I assured him. Gradually it dawned on him that we were really Chinese troops, and had returned this way in pursuit of the Japanese. I asked him why he had not escaped. He explained that when the village was occupied, some ten or more of them had failed to get away in time, and that

he himself had hidden in a dried-up well.

The devils had only occupied the village for two days, after which they were driven out by our forces. It had not actually been a battle-ground: the devils had brought their dead here and burnt them. They had thrown some of the badly wounded into the fire too. These victims, dying in torture, had cried out in pitiful twitters. The sound rent one's heart, but the Japanese soldiers had taken no notice.

I asked the old fellow whether he had seen the devils withdrawing. He believed some of the other villagers had seen them go. One night, he explained, several shells had been fired into the village by our batteries, and the devils had taken to their heels. They burnt more than half of the cottages before they went, but none of the villagers dared come near to put the fire out.

Eventually I was able to find some shelter in a wrecked house, which only barely protected me from the mounting wind and rain. The wall was pierced by two great shellholes, and both wall and ground were spattered with the blue-scarlet stains of human blood. I took no notice of all this, but spread some rye straw over the ground, and

then lay down and fell asleep. I slept until an orderly

brought in my supper and woke me up.

Having had some rest, we were all in high spirits that night. We sang lustily, and our uproarious voices startled the whole village and the surrounding countryside.

Chapter III

The Second Battle of Taierchuang

I

AT 6 o'clock on the 20th we resumed our march. The most unpleasant feature of marching by night was that one could hardly avoid stepping on the unburied bodies that lay heaped by the roadside. Even the scent of wildflowers that filled the air could not drown the sad, rancid breath blown up by the wind!...

On the far horizon we could pick out flashes of gunfire: otherwise the night was deathly dark, and the plain vast and chaotic. We lost our direction. Our hearts grew dim at the thought of the battle developing

ahead of us.

On the way we met several of our wounded comrades being carried back from the firing-line. But they could

not tell us how the battle was going.

On the second day we realised that the enemy must have brought up reinforcements and, having succeeded in piercing our line of encirclement at the point called "Flat Hill Mouth", had launched a counter-attack. It was here that our Division had been directed to hold them. Our vanguards had already made contact with the enemy, and were ready to open fire. On the morning of the 21st real contact was made between the two main forces, and the Second Battle of Taierchuang began to develop.

Dusk fell over the field. Beacon fires stretched from end to end of the plain, burning the canopy of the sky a savage red. Our orders were to recapture several villages that had fallen to the enemy. The infantry fought their way forward with intense bravery. Gleaming sword

clashed on sword, and blood streamed over the grass. By the light of shell flashes, their magnificent bodies and their shadows stood out, grappling the enemy hand to hand in a death struggle.

One very small village neither side would give up. Within twenty-four hours many attempts had been made to take it by storm. Five times we lost and regained it.

The enemy massed his mechanised forces and attacked on the ground and from the air simultaneously. Tanks charged us at the head of the infantry. They rolled on into our line and were again and again beaten back. Cowards!

The enemy gun-fire had already found the range of our Headquarters. It disturbed our work indoors, and we carried our office desks out into an open graveyard. The pine groves round us were brushed by flying shells; the trees shook, and twigs broke off and fell rustling to the ground.

Some days later our Division was assigned to fight in the frontal sector, and our Headquarters were once more removed, to the Temple of Iron Buddhas. Again we were within reach of the enemy gun-fire. Old Wang, one of our car-drivers, was just squatting behind a grave, when a splinter of flying shell hit him and blew off half his hip.

Stretcher-bearers were kept busy bringing back the wounded, and members of the "Sanitary Corps" were clearing the battle-ground in the occasional lulls, burying the bodies of the loyal dead. Army surgeons were rapidly binding up wounds: they had no time to spare yet for operations.

When the battle was at its hottest, Army Commander Yu and Divisional Commander Mou were both in the front line, directing operations, risking the enemy fire and every other danger like their soldiers. Two deserters were shot dead by General Yu's own hands.



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2

The battle had raged day and night for a week. The will of both officers and men to fight and kill the enemy had risen to a white-hot fury. They forgot to eat and had no desire to sleep. We had no trouble in getting supplies, but it had proved difficult to send up to the firing-line the usual rations of fried pancakes, pickles, boiling soup and hot water.

Presently a report came in that Commander Liu Ming-lang, who had been leading his regiment in the front line, had sacrificed his life with splendid heroism. When the news came to Headquarters, none of us dared believe it, until the brave and powerful body was rushed back by some of his men, and lay before us, bloody and mangled. Grief and rage struggled in our hearts and we burned to revenge him.

Brigadier Fu Hsien-mei was the next officer to follow Commander Liu. At the head of his men he fell heroically while challenging the enemy for possession of the village Shao. While he had still breath in his lungs he shouted, "Brothers, forward!" Then he said to a fellow-officer, "I'm finished. Go quickly and take my place." He died before he could be brought to a stretcher.

When General Mou was informed by telephone of the brigadier's death, he stamped his feet on the ground and cried bitterly. When Fu's brave and loyal body was brought in to Headquarters, the General gave him a quick glance of farewell, and was unable to look again upon his dead friend. All of us felt tears in our eyes when we saw that pitiful body, riddled by bullets. General Mou was so grieved at the brigadier's death that for a long time he could neither eat nor drink. Over and over again he himself went up to the firing-line, inspecting and directing, and planning revenge. To gallop into the front line in defiance of enemy gun-fire — this was the spirit of our officers, even of the highest rank.

A certain Chang, who had been promoted to the rank of battalion commander three days before, had failed in his duty in the fighting at Shao village. He was court-

martialled by General Mou's orders.

The military court proved him guilty of withdrawal without receiving orders from his superior officer. There was no leniency in our military law. When Chang was led out to be shot, he heaped complaints on his orderly, who, he said, had dragged him away from the firing-line. But his protests came too late. One of our proverbs says, "A noble death weighs as heavy as Mount T'ai; an ignoble one as light as swansdown". Through a fit of folly, Commander Chang had not died in a proper cause. We all felt regretful about him.

3

Commander Li of the Fifth Company paid a visit one day to our Divisional Headquarters. He had a new slash on his face, and I asked him how he had come by it. He

then told me a very interesting story.

When a battle had been raging at white heat, he, at the head of a section, had been stealthily feeling his way towards, as he believed, the enemy lines. But in the moonless night he had lost his way, and found himself in a position of extreme danger. He had crawled into the enemy's rear!

Suddenly on the embankment of a wheat field, discernible by the dim light of the stars, he came upon a machinegun! Three enemy soldiers, all in steel helmets, were

lying flat beside it.

Li stood still for a moment; then, finding he had not been discovered, worked his way round behind the three men and flung himself upon them.

One of the devils sprang to his feet and fled, leaving not a shadow behind. Li pinned the second under his own

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body, and as the third was feeling for his pistol, Li's orderly rushed up and shot him down.

Li's antagonist meanwhile was struggling savagely to escape, and tried to tear Li's face with his fingers. The orderly came once more to the rescue and shot the devil dead. With their machine-gun prize, the two of them retired triumphantly, pursued by another enemy group which had taken alarm and was firing at random into the darkness.

Li also told me that the devils had impounded some "puppet" troops from our own North-eastern provinces, and others from the "puppet" Police Regiments of Hopei and Shantung provinces, driving them here to serve as cannon fodder.

One of these unfortunates, he went on, had fled over to the Chinese lines, fully armed, and implored us to let him serve with our forces. Crying miserably, he told how all the members of his family were still living in his home town, closely watched by the enemy, who used them as hostages to guarantee his own loyalty. But he had determined to play no more part in this tragedy of Chinese dying at the hands of Chinese. He would rather sacrifice the lives of all his family, if he could turn his sword against the Japanese. Before the Mukden incident of 1931, he explained, he had been a company commander in the Chinese North-eastern army. What a sorrowful, brave and moving choice he had made!

For a few days our men in the front line had a little respite. But still they had to squat in the trenches all day long, under a scorching sun which burnt like fire, and they had nothing to eat or drink until dusk, when some of their fellow-soldiers could bring them a meal. In the nights of early summer chilly winds swept into the trenches and pierced their thin uniforms till they shook with cold. But

31 D

An "incident" arranged by the Japanese, which led to their seizure of Manchuria.

neither we nor the enemy facing us relaxed for an instant.

On the battle-ground between us the unburied bodies gave off a suffocating stench. In the most forward lines

neither side was allowed to go and bury its dead.

Our advance patrols usually piled bundles of straw in front of their positions, and these proved very effective in betraying the approach of an enemy scout crawling towards their lines. Others would conceal a hand grenade in the burial-ground, pulling the fuse half-way out. If an enemy soldier came that way, he returned no more to his base.

The tension on the centre and left wing relaxed from time to time. It seemed that the enemy's main thrust was being directed against our right wing, which consisted of Yünnanese troops. When they were despatched from their own native province of Yünnan to fight in Shantung, they posted on their military trains the slogan: "We were born South of the Clouds. We will die East of the Mountain!" 1 Brave words!

These Yünnan troops held positions on the Hill of King Yu sector. The enemy had suffered hundreds of casualties in his attempt to capture the hill, but the defenders had

not yielded an inch of ground.

The nights were wet and gloomy, and the battle raged all night long. A wrecked house where I and my colleagues were billeted had been half burnt down. The rain dripped through and soaked the piles of straw we had spread on the ground for bedding. It was useless to think of sleep.

The rattle of machine-guns and the sharp explosion of grenades beat deafeningly on our ear-drums: bursting shells and slashing rain combined in a chaotic symphony.

The noise only died down as dawn broke.

These expressions are literal translations of Yünnan and Shantung.

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In the daytime both sides fought an artillery duel. Recently we had been able to bring up some new heavy guns. They were fired by electricity, and the shells, about three feet long, were transported on six-wheeled or eightwheeled lorries. Evidently the enemy was not relishing the effect of our new batteries: he sent planes over day after day to reconnoitre our gun positions.

One day we constructed a dummy gun platform, complete with imitation gun and equipment. The enemy's reconnaissance planes quickly picked out the "target". Soon after, three bombers roared over and discharged more than twenty bombs. Our wooden gun and straw soldiers were burnt to ashes, but the Japanese

devils had squandered their precious material.

We were also highly amused on another occasion when some enemy planes hovered for a long time immediately over the village where we were all stationed. Finally one of the bombers dropped down a hand grenade; we wondered whether they would take to dropping stones on us! . . .

5

On the eastern edge of the village there was a large pond. While our men were off duty some of them would go down there to "grope" for fish. To their surprise, they fished up many domestic utensils - iron pots, rice bowls, and even a large wagon! They were the belongings of the evacuated villagers, who had hidden their things in the water, hoping they would thus be spared from destruction by the enemy. We sent all the things we had "fished" out of the water to the Adjutant Department. Occasionally some of the refugees returned home and found all their belongings in good order, with nothing damaged, just as they had been in peace-time. They expressed their contentment and returned to the place where they had taken refuge.

Apart from these oddities, we brought up a huge quantity of fish, large and small, including specimens of all kinds, some of which I had never seen before. Our orderlies caught two eels. They were fearful to look at, like snakes, but when cooked they tasted delicious. In this isolated countryside we had nowhere to spend our money, but still we managed to find delicacies. Another orderly, returning from Hsüchou, brought back a chicken. He auctioned it for two Chinese dollars. Though that was dear enough, he didn't lack a customer.

When we had exhausted the fish of the pond, we turned to the Grand Canal. There the supplies of fish were inexhaustible, but the water was not shallow enough to wade

in, and we had to have large nets.

Our Supply Battalion had been billeted in the village of Chen Tower, on the south bank of the Canal. There were about thirty families living there, and we felt sure we

should find some nets among them.

We crossed the pontoon bridge of the Rear Floodgate and were walking towards Chen Tower village, when an enemy plane appeared overhead. I took cover in a wheat field, and while the enemy hunted in vain for a target, I crouched on the field embankment and gathered a large bunch of various wild-flowers. The plane made off and we continued on our way.

We found Commander Chen of the Supply Battalion in his quarters. It was a new house in which a young village couple had just celebrated their wedding. They had fled away from this battle area, and their bridal

chamber had been left like a sombre empty cave.

At the entrance gate there still stood the wedding posts, with some poetical lines describing the happy marriage of "the talented scholar and the beautiful lady" pasted up on them. Over the gate was a horizontal beam on which was written "Heaven has united them!" As I read over the lines, clutching my bundle of wild-flowers, I tried to

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imagine that I too was a happy bridegroom!

My friend Wang jokingly pointed at Commander Chen and demanded that he should play the part of the bride.

"No!" I objected hastily. "I refuse to marry that

dark, fat and heavily-bearded young lady!"

"Don't be so obstinate!" retorted Wang. "The stars reveal no Pink Phoenix I for you, but a Black Devil. You and this lady had better get on with the wedding rituals."

So saying, Wang half dragged, half pushed Commander Chen towards me. But Chen was so embarrassed and put-out that he began to threaten Wang with his whip.

While this tomfoolery was going on, Li, one of the army clerks, had discovered a large net, and together with a few soldiers had gone off to fish. So a small party of us decided to stroll round the village. Afterwards we walked a little way along the main road southwards towards Hsüchou, to have a look at the traffic. On the way we came upon a very sorrowful domestic tragedy.

A refugee family consisting of an old couple and their young daughter-in-law, who was nursing a new-born baby at her breast, had apparently fled from their own village

about a hundred li away.

By the roadside some hawkers were selling food they had brought from Hsüchou. But the family's whole wealth now was an old ox, which they were offering for sale at five Chinese dollars. So far no customer had appeared. They were starving and obliged to sell their old friend for food. But an even graver problem faced them. The young daughter-in-law was weeping despairingly, for without the ox to ride on how could she carry the baby? They had a long way to go and she was already ill. But clearly they couldn't all starve for the baby's sake. It seemed they must either give the little creature to some passer-by or desert it. But who could harden his heart enough to carry out such a plan? The

A beautiful wife.

old people couldn't bear to abandon their grandson, and still less would the mother give up her tiny baby. They simply sat by the roadside and cried, and the passers-by who stopped and stood round them wept for sympathy.

"Where is the little one's father?" I asked the old

man. He began to weep even more heart-brokenly.

"Some time ago my son went back to the village where we were living. He wanted to fetch a little grain from our storehouse. Since then he hasn't returned to us, and maybe the devils have . . ." He could not go on but, murmuring and groaning to himself, began to cry aloud.

We started to make a collection, which eventually came to a little more than ten Chinese dollars, and I made it up to fifteen. This would support the whole family for several days. In the meantime we gave them all the bread we had brought with us: we could easily make some more for ourselves when we returned to Chen's place. We were also looking forward to the fresh fish the others had been catching, and lacked nothing for a very tasty supper.

We had solved these poor people's difficulties, and the whole of the family knelt down on the road to thank us. We quickly prevented them: in simply giving the little within our power none of us thought it a charitable

action.

I was reminded of the scene on the day before the second battle for Taierchuang flared up. Crowds of refugees had escaped from Ihsien, and were pouring headlong like a whirling flood down the main road on the southern bank of the Grand Canal. Some were tugging their oxen and donkeys with them, and others drove furiously in wagons. Those with no means of transport carried the whole of their property on their shoulders. Shouting for their fathers and crying for their mothers, supporting the aged and carrying the children in their arms, they poured along the road towards Hsüchou.

Enemy planes gave them no respite, but bombed and



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machine-gunned them continuously. The wounded refugees were unable to go on and fell beside the road, while their family stood round, mourning hopelessly. It had been a deeply distressing sight.

Fortunately, our Divisional Commander had given orders that military surgeons should be despatched to attend to the wounded. The serious casualties were sent to military hospitals in the rear, with their papers signed

at our Headquarters.

Where had those unfertunate people got to now? I wondered. They might well have escaped to a still more disastrous spot. . . .

Chapter IV

Retreat to the West

I

THE great second battle for Taierchuang, in which our army had been engaged for a full month, was developing to our advantage, when our Division suddenly received the order to make a fighting withdrawal.

We had long been aware that our other armies were expecting to march, and we were ready to relieve their positions. This movement would not have surprised us. But now we too were ordered to withdraw; it seemed that something important was afoot. The plans were now kept in strict secret by the officers, and the rest of us were left to speculate.

We waited for the order to march. For two nights I had slept very badly. Our supplies had already been transferred across the river, and our troops could move over the moment the order came.

At dead of night on May 16th we were directed to march towards Hsüchou. The whole of our army, in response to directions given by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, had fought stubbornly during the final three days of the defence of Taierchuang. Now we were ordered to fight a rearguard action.

This was again a night march, but in contrast to the freedom we had formerly enjoyed, we were now subjected to the strictest discipline. The battalions and companies of the Division were all assembled outside the village. Talking, coughing and smoking were strictly forbidden!

What a still and lonely night that was! The quietness was broken occasionally by the fitful barking of village dogs and the hoarse croaking of frogs. Otherwise, all

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was profoundly silent. We even tried to muffle our marching tramp: no one dared thump out a goose-step! The constellations had come to see off this enormous herd of human beings, moving out towards the bright high-road.

The solemn shadow of stately and dignified Taier-chuang emerged from the deep night under the pure white rays of stars and moon, pregnant with the glorious memory of her victories. The ancient city walls stood high and staunch. Here was the citadel and here the walls, built on streams of blood and mounds of flesh—the offering of our loyal and fearless soldiers. Our undaunted, unconquerable spirit would be expressed here for ever. Now Taierchuang was waiting for the enemy's destructive fire. She was determined to sacrifice herself for our cause.

After we had crossed the pontoon bridge over the Grand Canal, the tension was relieved a little. On the main road, our military cars and lorries rattled along at high speed and without respite. All night long military transports were on the move, making all the haste they might.

Our group of Staff officers encamped at a small farm-house south of a village called "Swallow Stone". The evil hands of war had not yet touched this little village, and all was peaceful and still. A family of two, mother and son, acted as our hosts. The old woman was over fifty, while the son, she said, was twenty-one. Evidently each was the very life of the other, supporting each other through these years of war. Indeed, all the peasants in these parts were faithful and kind: it was the tradition of the Northern Chinese.

The two good people moved their own bedding into the kitchen, and gave over to us their three newly-built halls and surrounding rooms. How grateful we were!

¹ The typical Chinese house is a one-storey building with living- and sleeping-rooms leading off from a central hall. Often there are several such buildings in one establishment, joined by open courtyards and surrounded by a high wall.

The son also brought us boiled water. This was more precious to us than even the "dew of gems and juice of jewels" described in our fables — for we had marched all night long and were terribly thirsty.

As a rule we paid our hosts for boiling water, for the cost of the dried grass they burnt. But this old lady and her son stubbornly refused to accept anything from us.

Next morning, as soon as I stirred from sleep, I heard a great commotion in the courtyard. I got up hastily and went out to see what was going on. Out there a joyful ceremony was in progress. I should never have guessed that this was to be the wedding day of my old hostess' son!

The villagers had heard that the fighting would soon spread to their district, and the bride's parents had taken fright. They had not even waited to choose a lucky day for the wedding, but had sent their daughter to her mother-in-law immediately and entreated her to let the wedding take place at once.

The bridal pair were just taking part in the ceremony of kowtowing in homage to Heaven and Earth.² In the middle of the courtyard a table had been arranged with incense sticks and ceremonial candles, but they had evidently not prepared the pig's head or the other flesh of the "three sacrificial articles".³ I noticed that a mirror had been placed in the centre of the table, which was not the custom in my part of the country.

I urged them to complete the wedding rituals as quickly as they could, so as not to display such articles in the open courtyard for too long. If an enemy plane were to come

In the Lunar calendar advice is given about lucky and unlucky days, the ruling of good and bad spirits, etc. Certain days in the year are indicated as "auspicious" for a wedding.

² A part of the marriage ritual is a kowtow (i.e. kneeling down and striking the red carpet with the forehead) to the spirits of Heaven and Earth.

³ The "three greater sacrificial articles" are composed of the carcasses of an ox, a sheep and a pig. The "three lesser sacrificial articles", and which are usually offered nowadays, are a pig's head, a carp and a chicken.

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over the mirror would make a splendid target. When they heard my warning, all the neighbours who had crowded in to watch the proceedings were reminded once more of their terrible situation. But for the time being the happy scene was concluded amid the cheers and laughter of the crowd. The two young people entered their wedding chamber — the kitchen.

We insisted on moving out of our rooms for the benefit of the bridal pair, but the old lady refused to allow it. She wanted us to have a good rest during the day before resuming our night march. She herself and the young couple could move into the new buildings after we had gone, she explained, and we had to fall in with her goodhearted suggestion.

Enemy planes came into action that day. In formation after formation they roared over without pause all the afternoon. I took shelter in a small ditch outside the village wall, hiding myself deep in the long green undergrowth.

The planes hovered above the village, and seemed to skim over the very house where we had been lodging. With a sharp shriek one of them would swoop down through the air, drop a bomb, and climb roaring up again. With the gesture of aged eagles falling upon their prey, one after another they hurled down their bombs. At least ten of them seemed to have scored hits on the village, and columns of black smoke immediately belched up tens of feet into the air. All this time I felt very anxious about the newly married couple. Had they also run out of the village for safety?

The last shadow of the enemy planes vanished and I returned to my billet. I found everything as before. All the bombs had fallen to the north of the village, several li away. No one knew yet what damage had been done.

As dusk fell, and before we resumed our journey, it began to rain. By and by the rain fell very heavily and

I had no umbrella. My landlady found me an old straw hat with an eight-cornered brim. I wanted to pay her in cash, but she refused to take it. So I offered her a box of "Sunlight" soap, which I had brought with me, and

which would also serve as a wedding present.

Before we had gone far we noticed the glow of a fire breaking the darkness, and I felt sure it was a signal given by local traitors. Our vanguards were already far ahead, and as we hurried after them we found the glare came from an ox-wagon which had been hit in the afternoon raid. An old ox lay dead beside the wagon, and the load had caught fire and was still smouldering. As we advanced along the main road we came upon two or three ox-wagons burnt up in the same way, a dull glow rising from their ashes. Donkeys and oxen lay stiff and stark by the roadside: some were still harnessed in their yokes.

Guns roared ceaselessly all night long. In the bewildering, chaotic, cold and gloomy darkness we were unable to judge from which direction the battle had

flared up again.

Just outside every village we passed, we saw a water jar — but without a drop of water in it. We were desperately thirsty, but felt we could not knock up any of the villagers and disturb their pleasant dreams. We would have drawn the water up ourselves, but had no rope. At last we hit on the plan of stripping off our leather belts and tying them together to make a chain. By this device we quenched our thirst.

Dawn would soon be breaking. To avoid attacks from enemy bombers we were ordered to double our pace. My feet were heavily blistered by now, and I could hardly go

on. I began to fall behind.

I reached a village at last, and finding an old man

The villagers had evidently put out jars of water for the troops marching by night, but another column passing through before had emptied them.

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outside one of the cottage doors, I went up to him, intending to beg for a drink of water. But I found two of my comrades were there already and were boiling water for themselves. The old peasant told me that nearly all the villagers had fled, and that he had been trusted by his master to stay behind and look after the house.

A number of ducks waddled into the living-room and flapped off again, quacking and squabbling. These small creatures had now become like tramps. Deserted by their

masters, they could find nobody to care for them.

2

The enemy plan for attacking Greater Hsüchou was to outflank us on the approaches, and finally to encircle our garrisons. Our High Command had foreseen such a move, but had failed to distribute our strength so as to counteract it.

Our Division had by now advanced to a small village a little more than ten li distant from Hsüchou. All day long

the boom of guns shook the air. . . .

One afternoon the army surgeons began to distribute bandages and sun-stroke remedies, while our munition section urged us to fetch our gas-masks. The Staff Department had issued several important orders. We were preparing to march that night, and we worked with restless energy.

This village where we camped was on the borders of Kiangsu province, and I noticed that the people's habits here differed in many ways from those of their neighbours in Southern Shantung. The village homesteads were dotted about along the edges of the fields like chessmen on a board. In between them thick woods had sprung up, shutting off the sun. Behind the village a precipitous hill rose like a sharp wall. In the stillness of night a slender crescent moon poured her beams from the crest of

the high hill, and pierced the woods, scattering the shadows of the leaves over the ground. I could have dreamed I was in one of the remote and quiet gardens of Paradise, had not the thunder of guns constantly throbbed in my ears.

The order was received to march at 2 o'clock that

morning.

We first passed a walled town set on a hill. Below it a vast plain unrolled. The moon, like a lantern, showed us our way. We passed several villages, all quiet as tombs: not even a dog's bark was heard.

The sheaves of newly reaped wheat stood abandoned in the fields: it seemed that no one had been left to cart and store it. The villagers had left their treasures behind.

Early in the morning some enemy planes spotted us. Fortunately the fields of rye and other crops gave us good shelter. By 10 A.M. we reached the village of Fangshang.

More than half the inhabitants had already left their homes. The house where I was billeted was empty: the family had gone away. In the evening, to our surprise, a flock of sheep walked in. They easily found the way into their own folds, but after a short time they walked out again. It really seemed they were suspicious that the people in the house were no longer their masters. They seemed to sense that we were strangers from a far distance, and feared we might prove unkind lodgers.

That night we marched again, to the village of Meng, and there the news reached us that our army had evacuated Hsüchou. The political workers, the station staff and the hospital personnel, men and women, who had formerly remained behind in Hsüchou, were now being removed. One section after another passed along the main road

outside our village.

Before we set out again that evening we were given orders from the Supply Section that all cumbersome and heavy personal belongings must be abandoned. Mules

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must be yoked to the transport wagons. Meanwhile the Paymaster was distributing pay to the troops. Every soldier received two Chinese dollars. Every man was then ordered to provide himself with dry provisions that would last for three days. It was apparent that some serious operations lay ahead.

Chapter V

Storming "Gateway to the Great Mountains"

I

THIS is a most memorable night in my life — the night of May 20th, 1938. At dusk we formed as usual into sections for the march. As we set out on that early summer night flooded with moonlight, and under the glittering stars, we sometimes looked back and caught the glare of distant fires lighting up the sky. The enemy beasts were even now burning, looting and killing the civil population — our own kith and kin!

We advanced in columns. Thousands upon thousands of human beings moved across the vast plain: it seemed as if a monstrous creeper was crawling up along the motor

road.

The white and pure rays of the moon pierced the crests of the tall trees by the roadside. The chilly dew drenched our clothes and the cold night air bit into our flesh and bones. I was lucky enough to have a fur-lined coat which I used as a sleeping-bag, and which I could wrap round myself on the march. When we halted for a brief rest I spread it on the ground and dropped asleep. About half an hour later the order was given to resume march. My comrades shook me up and I woke shivering.

We were now gradually passing into a hilly district. We picked our way by moonlight along narrow, bumpy lanes, passing through villages in the hill hollows. Suddenly the noise of dogs barking shattered the stillness. It seemed like a warning to us of danger and hardships

ahead!

In those deep valleys, especially at dead of night, any voice sounded strangely sharp and clear, ringing and loud.



Storming "Gateway to the Great Mountains"

The distinct roar of guns thundered ahead of us, still far in the distance. We judged that the battle was still raging in the direction of Suhsien.

Advancing through gaps in the mountains, fording the rocky streams, and picking our way along mountain paths that coiled and twisted like snakes, we emerged at last on to a smooth slope running down to the plain. The moonlight had grown faint and night seemed to engulf the universe. Nothing could be clearly distinguished: every object on the whole earth had become a blurred contour.

Our troops suddenly halted. The report came -

"Enemy forces ahead! Squat down!"

A Very light shot up in front of our columns, shivered and glittered like a small blue star in the night air, and faded in a few minutes. Enemy troops were holding the mountain gap ahead of us: not a man was to move without orders.

This was the gap called *Hung Shan Kou* — "Gateway to the Great Mountains". What a ringing name!

The moon was waning now. It shone on the silvery-grey surface of the great earth in a sorrowful and lonely mood. Before us rose peak after peak. Was it here or there that the enemy lay concealed? Occasionally an electric torch flashed from one of his positions. Then suddenly a wave of howling rose from that direction! It was easily recognisable as the singing of our enemy—his loathsome wailing tunes!

Our vanguards had already prepared their positions. We were to make a sortie and break through the enemy lines. Undaunted at the prospect, our troops were grasping their rifles at the ready. By the light of the moon I could clearly see them crouched for attack.

Before the *devils* had stopped their wailing we had emptied our first round of fire into their lines. Then came the order "Charge!"

Then every unit in the Division, and we political

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workers as well, charged forward in four columns. Our battle-cries shook the earth and sky!

Zzzz . . .! Shrieking bullets were flying over our heads and thudding in the ground behind us. I ran with my head bent, almost touching the ground. If anyone had the bad luck to fall, he would have to be abandoned.

We made our break-through successfully, and now found ourselves in sight of a village. I felt I could fill my lungs and breathe again. Morning was just breaking—the fresh and beautiful morning of summer. The sun's red ball rose gradually. Far and wide over the fields everything was stirring from sleep. Roosters and dogs in the mountain villages, disturbed by the unaccustomed clamour of war, barked and crowed in mingled confusion.

Soon after we left the danger area we were again spotted and pursued by enemy gun-fire. It was broad daylight, and we found ourselves on an open plain, unprotected by any defence works and still distant from the spot where we intended to pitch camp. We had to

split up and proceed by different routes.

I was marching with a small group. Suddenly we heard the scream of a shell coming towards us. One of our party dodged behind a large tree and threw himself down beside a stout piece of root that bulged above the ground. No sooner had he done so than a shell splinter crashed on to the root and blew out a great chunk of it. Without that saving piece of root he would have had his head blown open!

We hurried on eastwards and passed through a village. All round the village well stood clusters of our men, gulping down the cold, unboiled water to their hearts' content, not caring for the trouble it might soon make in

their stomachs.

Freshly escaped from death, I began to feel ravenously hungry. My bag of dried fried rice which I had slung on my back, and which was to have lasted me three days,

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had been lost — when, I had no idea.

Enemy planes roared over us again. I squatted under a flowering peach-tree till they passed over. I stood up, but all the strength had gone from my body. Regretfully I had to abandon my precious fur-lined coat.

From a northerly direction another barrage of machinegun fire went up, whether from the enemy lines or our own I couldn't tell. If the enemy had again encircled us,

we should have no chance of escape.

We had struggled on a short distance when enemy aircraft began to hover yet again over our heads. We scattered and lay down in fields of young rye. I opened my pack and took out some books, my diary and Min's letters, and tore them into little pieces. I buried them in a tiny "grave of fragrance" on the field embankment, letting my warm tears fall on them.

The enemy planes had now flown off. I emerged from the rye field, but only to find that my comrades were already far away. I could not see the least trace of them and began to feel thoroughly alarmed. Alone as I was, I dared neither linger nor delay. I dragged myself along a road without any idea of where it would lead me.

I came to a village, and was told that about ten li ahead was the "Market of Double Ditches" where the Japanese had established Headquarters. I had to turn back!

Now it appeared that enemy cavalry patrols were being sent into the surrounding villages to round up our stragglers who had fallen behind our main troops. Their tall and robust horses of foreign breed and the steel helmets of the riders made them easily distinguishable from a great distance. I hid myself in a field of China-grass, which made a denser cover than rye, but to my dismay, as the enemy rode into the village they began to fire all around them at random. Trapped where I was, I felt wretchedly uneasy, but how could I get away? The only road of escape led to death!

As bad luck would have it, one of these stray bullets struck my left elbow. I felt no pain at the first moment, and only when a great spurt of blood sprang out from my arm did I realise that I had been wounded. But I remained very calm.

I remembered that I had with me my "woundprotecting package". I took it out quickly and unwrapped it with one hand. There was a bandage and lint soaked in a red-coloured antiseptic. I bandaged myself up, but the blood continued to stream out. I also had with me a "pain-dispelling pill" which I swallowed.

The whole of my left arm swelled up instantly. All my skin and flesh down to the wrist became discoloured and passed from green to purple and black. Under the wound itself there seemed to be a kind of hard nut. This gave me the chief anxiety, for I thought the bullet was still in my flesh. If this were so, my arm wouldn't recover. Deformity! The very thought of it filled me with repulsion.

And I was still in the area of enemy encirclement. I had no weapons and no money for travelling expenses. How could I go on? Could I drag myself back home, and

look only once more at my beloved . . .?

But I ought not simply to sit there and wait for death. I couldn't offer myself, like a young lamb, to be butchered by the enemy. I firmly resolved once more to go in search

of my own troops.

After waiting until the evening began to grow grey and brown, I clambered up from the China-grass field into a field of rye. I gathered some rye seeds, crushed them, and ate them raw. This made my meal for the day. I was obliged to strip off my blood-soaked uniform, and my arm-badge I concealed in my socks. I looked all round and could not see the single shadow of a human being. Then I rose up and, clasping my wounded arm, made for a village in a north-westerly direction.

Coming across a villager with a basket clearing up

ordure in the street, I asked him where I could find a

hospital. He seemed amazed at my enquiry.

"Hospital? There were two in the Wang Market village, but they were both destroyed by enemy bombers the day before yesterday. The two doctors escaped, I don't know where."

Having told me this, he looked me up and down and only then discovered that I was wounded. He gazed at

me sympathetically but with fear.

I begged him to help me find some civilian clothes. I wanted to buy a suit with my remaining eleven Chinese dollars. He led me into the village and found me a rotten and much-patched suit of blue cotton. It looked like a street-beggar's, but what could I do? It didn't really matter that the clothes were worn out, and I put them on without hesitation. The man also found a battered straw hat for me. My new suit, too, was very soon soaked with blood.

The villagers crowded round me and stared. More than ten pairs of eyes were fixed on my body, and I felt rather like a curious monster held up for inspection by a crowd of onlookers. I had fasted all day, but felt no hunger. I had been desperately thirsty, however, after being wounded, and I felt this thirst would destroy me. But I remembered the warning that no wounded soldier should drink cold, unboiled water. It might mean immediate death.

"Would any old gentleman or old lady here do a merciful deed," I implored, "and boil some water for me? I am bleeding and ought not to drink cold, fresh

water," I added in explanation.

A kind-hearted fellow called Wang brought me to his home, where his mother boiled a pot of water for me, and gave me a piece of glutinous millet-cake to eat. This was an excellent food — a speciality of the villagers in Northern Anhwei.

Then another misfortune unexpectedly befell me. The villagers suddenly began to scatter in terror, saying that

the devils were coming back again.

Mingling with the villagers, I made my escape from the village. Wang found a safe place for me among the marshes. He hid me in a reed grove on a dried-up pond, and returned home. To my surprise, I came across a fellow-soldier there who, like myself, had not been able to

keep up with the main body of our troops.

Dark clouds closed in and covered all the shining stars which had been peering down over the whole plain. The curtain of night, dark as black lacquer, spread across every object in the human world. My companion and I slipped down on to the damp earth of the reed pond, crushing some of the rushes under the weight of our bodies, and made for ourselves quiet and comfortable beds.

From time to time we heard the dispiriting and heavy roar of the guns, which shattered the silence between us. Evidently the enemy was setting fire to the villages in the neighbourhood. Once we crept out of the reed pond and could clearly see long tongues of fire licking out of doors and windows, burning half the sky scarlet against the background of the dense black night. Then we heard several shrieks and screams. These were not the voices of ghosts but of living men in torture and pain! We had no doubt that the enemy beasts were throwing into a pit of fire either our fellow-countrymen or their own gravely wounded soldiers. Ample proof of this cruel deed had been found after many of the great battles.

Presently a heavy storm broke, and one after another the glowing fires died out. The roars of the guns ceased too, and all was silence. Only the sad driving of the rain continued incessantly. The raindrops beat upon the blades of the reeds and dripped off on to our thin clothes. I continually shivered with cold. Here, in the depths of

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night, and almost dead with exhaustion, I feared I might now die of exposure.

After some discussion, my new companion and I decided to return to the village. If the enemy were to attack us, we could at least die fighting, while if we stayed here we should merely be killed by the cold. Once more we crept out of the reed pond. We peered all around cautiously. We listened and heard no sound. It seemed that all the *devils* had been driven to shelter by the wild storm.

At a little distance from the village we came upon a damaged building from which glimmered a spark of fire lighting up the dark atmosphere. I remembered having noticed a deserted temple here in the daytime, and this was evidently its western chamber. I pushed open the door. It had only been on the latch. We slipped in and very lightly shut the door again. We nearly suffocated ourselves in holding our breath. We felt like two burglars breaking into someone's house!

By good fortune no one was there, and we felt profoundly relieved. On the ground stood a great earthenware pan, full to the brim with stewed beef. It smelled so strongly that I nearly vomited. It was probably one of the animals killed by the bombing some days ago that someone was cooking here.

In an iron pot more of the meat was stewing, and on the ground beneath it burnt a glowing fire. Although the beef was not yet cooked, we drank our fill of pungent beef soup, regardless of the consequences. To our amazement, it was extraordinarily sweet and appetising. It tasted far better than any ox-tail soup we could have bought at some westernised restaurant in one of the great cities.

The fire blazed gloriously. On the ground there was still some millet straw unburnt: we piled it all on to the flames. Really God had blessed us with these gifts. The cold had been driven away and our clothes were dried.

My fellow-soldier and I, friends in distress, now sat up and chattered, forgetting all the fatigues of the day.

Outside, the blustering wind and rain seemed to be growing stronger. Huge, boisterous raindrops beat hissing on the paper windows, or flowed down violently from the eaves to the ground, where a bubbling brook started up.

We had decided on the direction in which we might hope to overtake our troops. It lay due south. Whenever we reached a village we made enquiries, in case we should walk straight into the enemy lines. The villagers greeted us enthusiastically. They pointed us out the safest way and would take no money for our meals. We simply

asked for food and they brought it.

Once, in a certain village, when we had been given several pieces of black cake, an old woman, seeing that I was wounded and that my clothes were all red with bloodstains, was moved with kindness. Fearing that, in my condition, I should be unable to stomach such coarse food, she stopped me eating the cakes and quickly returned with three salted duck eggs, a big piece of white bread and some wheat porridge. All these she gave me, and when I wanted her to keep at least the eggs for herself, she urged me to take them with me and eat them on the way. I wept for gratitude till the tears streamed down my cheeks. I could weep still when I remember that scene!

I had reason to be even more grateful to another old woman at a village north of the Jen Market station. My companion and I were resting outside a garage when the old woman noticed that my clothes were soaked through with blood. She was afraid that this might cause trouble for me on my journey ahead, and offered to wash them for me. They would dry in a moment in the

hot sun of the summer afternoon, she explained.

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I couldn't refuse her kindness. This particular service was what I had been longing for. My trousers, however, were so far gone that they would not stand washing: the good lady hastened home and brought me back an almost new pair.

My clothes had no sooner been dried, and I had just managed to dress myself, when the villagers rushed out of the village in great consternation. They reported that a troop of cavalry was moving towards us, and they couldn't tell whether it was ours or the enemy's.

I persuaded them to be calm, and assured them that it was most unlikely to be the enemy. Finally I volunteered

to go and investigate.

I ran through the village from the east to the west side, and found that the entrance barriers of the village fortifications had been locked. Several horsemen were approaching them and I saw distinctly that they were our men. Presently I actually picked out Adjutant Li from the cavalry of my own Division. After him rode an

orderly and a groom.

I signalled to him and shouted to the villagers to unlock their barriers. How happy and excited I was to see him! As soon as he recognised me, he seemed astonished and overjoyed. He began to ask how I had come to drop behind, and how I had got my wound. I said good-bye to the equally surprised villagers and, falling in beside Li, I briefly related to him my adventures in the last twenty-four hours. He made fun of me for dressing up in civilian clothes. He declared, chuckling, that old man as he was he would never have abandoned his uniform for fear of the enemy. But still, he confessed that in all his long experience he had not been through such dangers as I had faced in the past day and night, when death threatened me at every moment.

He gave me an old uniform to change into, but I still kept on the old straw hat with its eight-angled brim. It

did not form an inharmonious picture on that summer day. We proceeded on our way, and presently reached a market town called "Ditch of Kuai Pond".

The enemy had not been in this vicinity, and trade and marketing were going on with their usual bustle. Adjutant Li had some money on him, and as this was no time to stand on ceremony, we went together to have a meal of noodles. I ate to my heart's content. We also ordered a pot of tea, and while we were leisurely enjoying the tea we exchanged news once more.

Then there was the problem of lodgings for the night. Although the little town was a big market centre, the responsible authorities were nowhere to be found at the town hall. We had to find a billet for ourselves in some villager's house. In the end, five of us went out and found

an empty garage.

We spent a very comfortless night there. My clothes were terribly thin and gave me no protection against the extreme cold of the small hours. I hadn't any cotton coverlet, and I lay on the bare ground without even a little bit of straw under me. Sleep would not come. As soon as I lay down and shut my eyes, I instantly began to tremble with cold. Some of my companions had brought a blanket, but I had no chance to share it. I couldn't get to sleep all night long. Instead, I sat up on the damp and icy ground and thought of this odious war that had deprived man of every happiness and blessing. But I encouraged myself to endure everything, because we were fighting aggression, and for the sake of lasting peace in the world. In our fight for freedom hardships could not be avoided. The personal grievances of an individual were hardly worth mentioning.

I groped in my pocket for some matches. I had found a few stems of millet straw and wanted to set them alight for warmth. Unfortunately there was no window in the garage, and it was very near the other village buildings.

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The fire might cause some accident, and my companions objected so vehemently that I had to give up the idea. On that early summer night it was as chilly as in autumn or winter. I huddled up to try and keep out the cold, but I still went on shivering: my lips trembled against each other, and my teeth chattered.

I imagined myself a tramp or a street beggar sleeping in an open alley-way or under the cement eaves of a rich house. Starvation and cold pressed on him; the angel of death hovered over him.

The thought of death filled me with bitterness. Was this to be the end of my life? It ought not to be such an end, for if I had to die, I should have done so bravely and gallantly on the battlefield, like so many of our fearless soldiers. Mere cold was indeed of no consequence. I jumped up, thinking that I might warm myself by some exercise. Alas! I carelessly stretched out my wounded arm, and the pain pierced me to the marrow. I had to lie still. Once more I was entangled in discomfort and suffering — gripped in their iron chains. I only longed for the dawn to break. Indeed, I longed for this as ardently as for the victorious end of the war!

A few late stars still hung sparsely in the dawn sky when we started on our way again. Like a soul that had lost all hope and had sunk into a deep pool, I now found myself delivered.

As we went along we passed no more market towns where we could have bought food, but luckily we were generously welcomed everywhere by the country-people They brought us plenty of pancakes and porridge to eat. After a two-days journey we arrived at Ssu.

I decided to go first into the walled city. The shops there had mostly closed down; only restaurants and public baths enjoyed a kind of boom. But I had no money, and all I could do was to look on and try not to be envious. My real business was to find a hospital and a

doctor who would ascertain whether the bullet was still lodged in my arm. All the smaller hospitals, including the private ones, had closed down: someone directed me to the General Hospital for wounded soldiers.

I came upon it after a roundabout walk. It had been set up in a large Buddhist temple at the south-east corner of the city, and a great many wounded soldiers were

housed there.

"Surgery at 6 P.M." How my heart sank when I read that notice! To avoid being bombed by the enemy, the doctors were not living in the hospital. I could get no information and had to wander away. I drifted despondently down the main street. Restaurants on either side opened out invitingly. Legs of pork and savoury chickens gave off a delicious aroma, invading my nostrils and making my mouth water. I felt ashamed and hurried away. I was relentlessly pricked by the pangs of hunger, and my imagination flew to visions of roomy flats, cars and westernized meals — all the pleasures of the rich in the great cities!

As 6 o'clock drew near I hurried back to the hospital. It was just the patients' supper-time. Pancakes, thin gruel, spring leeks and dried shrimps were being served round, and on seeing this good food I was seized again by an unbearable hunger. The wounded seemed to relish the flavour and sweetness of their dishes; they looked like people who had the rarest delicacies before them. I longed to share their meal, but was afraid of getting into trouble. Not having registered yet according to the usual arrangement, and being ignorant of the regulations, I thought I might find myself in an awkward situation.

But I was overcome with hunger. The sweet, savoury smell of the wheat and vegetables tempted me, and I could bear it no more. I went up to some of the soldiers and asked them, "Could I have some of that food?"

"Of course you may!" replied one of them. "Go

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and help yourself to anything you want!"

It was like angels' music to me. I went boldly up to

the distributing officer and received my portion.

"Oh God! is it a judgement on me that I should be reduced to such a state?" I asked myself. And I was filled with so bitter and sorrowful an emotion that my tears flowed.

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"Surgery open!" shouted the soldiers, who now began to flock towards the window where registration was made. I had certainly not expected that nearly three hundred wounded would be waiting for attention. My left arm was still very painful and I was anxious not to be jostled by the crowd. So I waited until all the others had been registered before walking up to the window. There I begged one of the officials in charge to do me a special favour, because I had to report to my Headquarters that same night.

Fortunately he fell in with my request, and giving me a registration card, took me over to the surgery and found me immediate attention.

The bandage round my arm had grown stiff with all the blood that had dried on it. It stuck so firmly to my skin that at first the doctor couldn't get it away. He had to soak it in some antiseptic and cut it away with scissors,

but even then it took some time to strip off.

I asked him specially to examine whether the bullet was still there. This seemed difficult for him because, as he said, he could only make certain by X-ray, for which he had no instruments. All he could do for the moment was to feel the wound with his fingers. He examined it carefully and diagnosed that the bullet had come out. He showed me how the mouth of the wound had closed, and that on the opposite side a scar had formed. But this I could hardly see clearly.

He said that the semblance of a hard nut under the skin might be caused by a twisted vein which would gradually relax. As to the discoloured green and purple appearance of the skin and flesh around it, that might come from clotted blood, and there was no harm in it. He put some ointment on the wound and bandaged it up. The thought of the twisted vein and the hard nut made by the bullet continued to worry and perplex me for a long time.

When I returned to Divisional Headquarters all our

men had already reported.

This was a busy season for the peasantry because of the wheat harvest. Our troops were sitatoned in the country-side, outside the walled city, and were waiting for the central authorities to send marching orders. Accordingly, we members of the Political Section started our work of organizing the people, while relays of our soldiers helped the peasants with the harvesting. Army and people became intimately united. Fighting songs — sad, bold and passionate — could be heard floating over the fields.

A week later we received the order to proceed towards the Ping-Han railway line. We prepared to move off immediately. It was understood, however, that in a section of the Tsin-Pu railway, between the Wo and Meng districts, there was a large enemy concentration. Since we should have to pass this section we were prepared for a very fierce encounter.

The Staff Department set to work planning the line of march and our general strategy. It was decided that our troops should advance in separate columns, but effect a junction to launch a combined attack upon the enemy.

Because there were already too many political workers at Divisional Headquarters, a new arrangement was made by which a number of us were despatched to Brigade Headquarters. Adjutant Li and I, together with a group

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of some ten Staff officers, were sent to join Commander Huang's regiment, stationed at a village fifteen li to the north-east of the walled city. Being newcomers, we had no billets prepared for us. It was, moreover, forbidden to intrude upon the villagers and, since night had already fallen, we had to sleep on the side of the street. Fortunately we found some straw to spread on the ground, and we had enough blankets between us. We huddled together, and although the cold of the night crept into our bones, we were able to endure it.

We had already slept far into the night when an order rang out to march! We all jumped up, renewed our spirits, and started once more upon our endless journey into battle.

Chapter VI

Through the Enemy Lines

I

THE night before we crossed the Tsin-Pu railway line, and shortly after we set out on our night march, thick clouds swung low over the sky. Flashes of lightning followed one after another, hindering our movements, which should have been carried out in complete darkness. Suddenly the storm broke, and a torrent of rain poured down on our heads, almost blinding us. Only when the lightning flashed could we now see our way along the narrow pathway. From a single careless step one might easily get a fall. Once I bumped my wounded arm against someone's body, and the pain was agonising. But I bit my teeth grimly and hurried after the rest.

In this manner we groped our way into a small town, and there had orders to halt. It was a market town, and the adjutants speedily knocked on the shop doors and assigned men to their respective billets, as they had arranged beforehand. Adjutant Li and I were lodged in a chemist shop. But our landlord's three small rooms were already crammed with soldiers. They slept on the beds, the counter and the floor and left no space for us. Li and I found our way to the kitchen. There by the stove was a heap of straw, and under the cooking-pot were some ashes just burnt out. They left a feeling of warmth.

I stripped off my wet clothes and put them to dry on the earthen frame which supported the pot. I covered myself with the dry half of one of Li's rather damp blankets and lay back on the nest of straw, meditating. Now I began to forget all the hardships I had suffered.

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The straw bed seemed to me softer and more luxurious than a well-sprung sofa or a great brass bed. I felt as happy as a lord!

Li was squatting beside the stove, smoking. On his much-wrinkled and aged face beamed a gay and carefree smile. The raindrops pattered on the thin kitchen wall, making a tuneful sound and a passionate rhythm. Gradually I was lulled to sleep by their comforting music.

As long as we were on the move I was personally free from any important work. But we had quite a problem to deal with: there was practically nothing on which we could spend our money! Local cigarettes were sold at the high price of twenty cents for ten, and even then we couldn't always get them. Some of us thought we would rather starve than have nothing to smoke. And the difficulty of supplies equalled the want of cigarettes. Although we were ready to pay a good market price for them, the people themselves had very little rice or wheat for sale. From time to time we had to ration our food, and so strictly that we even went hungry. As for peppery pickles, vegetable oil and salt, we were always short of them.

The country-people welcomed us enthusiastically everywhere. They offered to help us as plain-clothes intelligence agents, and at night they bravely acted as our guides. These were signs of the determination of the ordinary people in our war for freedom.

The night when we approached the Tsin-Pu railway line we picked out nineteen enemy cars sweeping their dazzling head-lamps towards us from a distance. But they were instantly switched back and turned hesitantly in another direction.

The fields and open moors were intersected with ditches, now flooded after the rain. On our night marches when it was foggy and dark one could easily make a false step and slip into the water. Such an

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unfortunate person would look like a drowned chicken when he clambered out!

In the fields the frogs croaked all night long, and with a raucous noise that made the very air vibrate. They

actually cheered us on our way.

While we were crossing the Tsin-Pu railway our vanguards took up positions round the whole section. A company of soldiers stood by to escort us, and machineguns were posted at either end of the crossing, ready to engage the enemy immediately he should be discovered.

The railway had been derailed a long time before, and the track, curving on into the far distance, looked like an enormous creeper, dead and stiff, twining itself over the

ground.

After we had got safely across, we arrived at the village of "T'ien Family's Lake", which had been our old Headquarters. The inhabitants knew that we were returning, and many of them crowded to see us to ask after their old acquaintances. They greeted us with kind familiarity, and told us about the cruelties and inhuman actions of the enemy who had passed through the village some time before. They had burnt down the houses, seized chickens and killed cattle, but this was nothing compared with some of their other deeds. Once they went to a village near by, and found an old woman of over sixty who had not been afraid of the coming devils. All the rest of her family had fled from the village, but she could not bear to leave her cherished home, and insisted upon staying to look after it. Then the devils began to burn her house down. She tried to prevent them, and angered them so much that they threw her into the fire, as they would a chicken, despite her grey hairs.

The old woman shrieked like a soul in Purgatory, but no one dared to come to her rescue. Her charred body was found among the ashes after the devils had gone.

On another occasion, about ten car-loads of the devils

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had driven into the village of "Cheng Family's Dike". They found all the villagers apparently gone, but they were clever enough to track down the women folk, who had hidden themselves in some marshes. When the latter saw the enemy approaching, they fled in all directions. The devils then began to fire on them with their rifles, and shot many of them dead.

Wherever these devils went they showed our people what was meant by the friendly favours of the "Imperial Army". The so-called favours were burning, looting and raping. In the occupied areas the inhabitants nursed

a steady hatred of the enemy.

"The Japanese soldiers are really like wild beasts!" said another old villager to us. "They stole our chickens, sheep, pigs and oxen. They flayed the animals alive, and baked and ate them there and then. Heaven forbid that any human beings could be so evil!" he went on. "My old life was nearly destroyed at their hands once, when I hadn't been able to escape and was caught by them. . . ." The old man clenched his teeth firmly. His eyes dilated with horror. His old hands were fumbling among the greyish-white hairs that fringed his chin. "Can you imagine," he asked, "can you guess how they dealt with me? "

Being thus questioned, his whole audience grew serious and silent.

"The devils commanded me to find them 'flowery girls '. How could I find them? This demand was going to be my ruin. I was, in fact, unable to find a single one, and these beastly creatures ordered me to pull down my trousers and lie on the ground. They were going to beat me with an iron bar. . . .

"Ugh! how I hate those devilish animals!" he burst out. "Damn it, if I were now in my twenties, call me the devil's grandson if I wouldn't join the army and whack

those turtles' eggs!" At this, the audience couldn't help bursting out laughing. Then one of my comrades began to poke fun at me. Pointing me out to the others, he said:

"Beware! the devils will soon be after you too!"

The reason for this jape was that during our night march I had slipped into a muddy ditch full of water. I had washed out my wet trousers, but they were not yet dry, and I had had to lie in bed half dressed, covering myself with a sheet borrowed from my landlord.

But the devils did not come for me. Instead, they sent their planes over the whole lot of us in the afternoon, but we had such an effective camouflage that they never found their target, and only wasted their precious aviation spirit.

That afternoon I bought an old fowl for eighty cents, intending it for the entertainment of some friends who were coming to see us. I couldn't get any sauce or other flavourings, and I had to boil the bird in plain water. I had to pay twelve cents for a catty of white flour, and when I had made some cakes from it they looked as dark as pig's liver. My own share of the fowl was one miserable drumstick.

Before we started out again, Huang, the regimental commander, summoned us to hear an order of the day. He was not tall, but had a plump, round face and the air of a refined and learned scholar. Fully armed, he stood erect before us, and looked round on us all with blazing eyes. When he began to talk he revealed the spirit of a dauntless leader.

He observed that since our great sortie at the "Gateway to the Great Mountains" until the present we had had several clashes with the enemy, which had resulted each time in our beating him off. This was a proof that the devils were not in any way exceptional fighters. Now we were going to pass over the districts of Wo and Meng, where, in all probability, we should again encounter the enemy.

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We must smash through his blockade with the spirit of "great fearlessness". Only when we were willing to fight to the death would the road to life lie open to us. If we were afraid of death, we should gain no victory. . . . Finally, Huang directed us in the strictest terms to keep a rigid discipline, and obey the orders of our commanding officer.

After hearing this we marched immediately. The shadows of "T'ien Family's Lake" gradually disappeared

behind us into the vast chaos of night.

"Tell the men behind to walk lightly," the soldier in front would whisper over his shoulder to the one behind him. But the muddy pools made constant squelching noises under our feet as we paddled through them. It was unavoidable. Sometimes we could hardly drag our feet out of the mud, and if our shoes had not been securely tied on they would have been deeply buried in the slime at the bottom of these water-holes. There was no time for anyone to halt and recover his lost footwear: he would have had to march on in his stockinged feet.

We were thirsty. There were ditches of water in plenty, but orders had been given that no one was to drink cold, unboiled water. Our thirst was hard to endure, and now and then someone would stealthily drink a cup of the water, swallowing it down without the least

noise.

On one occasion a fellow called Wang was so overcome with thirst — and he knew there would be no more ditches ahead — that he thought of his shoes which he had just washed out. They felt heavy and probably still held some drops of water. He took them off and, without more ado, drank up in a moment the dirty water which had been swilling about in the pair of them!

Life in the army contains unimaginable hardships.

The "ta wu wei" — "great fearlessness" — is a favourite term in Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary writings.

But it includes also, from time to time, such enjoyment as a man could find nowhere else all his life long. The songs of triumph sung after a victorious battle, rest taken after the extreme fatigue of the march, the hearty dinner for a stomach aching from several days' starvation - such are the unsurpassable joys of our fighters in this war for freedom. They are joys which those upper-class snobs who even in present-day China remain arrogant and selfimportant, self-indulgent but brainless, could never understand.

As soon as we entered the sector which covered the Wo and Meng districts we found that enemy troops were stationed everywhere. Outside the villages where they were encamped they would hang out several brightly-lit lanterns, as if in warning to their opponents: "Don't come and disturb our peace! Let us each go our own way and neither attack the other!" Since we had orders to reach our destination on a definite date, we had really

no time to play with those childish fellows.

Occasionally, however, our road of advance led us necessarily through villages where the enemy was stationed. Then the order was given: "Bayonets fixed!" This was the preparation for a hand-to-hand encounter. I, who had now been through my first experience of a sortie, felt indeed much more courageous than in the past. Besides, the devils were very timid. When we boldly pushed into one of these villages, they had already slipped away. Some did not escape in time, but shut themselves up in the peasants' houses, and held their breath. This was what we were told after we had passed through the village, by some of the neighbouring peasants.

A very amusing incident happened while we were crossing the river Kuai. We had been warned by our scouts that there were enemy troops ahead who had retreated from the direction of Suhsien. The order was given by our commander to liquidate them. But the

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enemy, four or five hundred strong, on hearing that we were going in to attack, were so terrified that they threw their heavy guns and machine-guns into the river and fled stealthily away in the direction from which they had come.

Up till the time when we crossed the Kuai river and began to encircle the town of Kuchen, we had not even seen the shadow of an enemy soldier. In Kuchen itself they had abandoned hundreds of bags of flour and, as it was inconvenient to carry them with us on the march, we immediately distributed them as gifts among the local inhabitants. After this we really began to joke about the timidity of the devils.

The prearranged time-table of our march had had to be altered. The summer rains poured down without pause like so many silk threads. The road had been damaged by storms, and the northern part of Anhwei province is full of marsh-land which holds the rain-water for some time in its channels and cuttings. Our road was deep in mud, and the march was quite indescribably difficult.

Having crossed the river Wo, we arrived in a market town called "Market of Western Sunshine". A town of some size, how could it have hoped to escape from the vast destruction of the war? Enemy bombing and burning had left the buildings in grotesque and disorderly ruins. No one had stayed to restore them. It was a dead town.

In advancing beyond this point we were due to come within the enemy's blockade. We were all excited. We had only proceeded a short distance from "Market of Western Sunshine" when instructions came back from our vanguards: "Squat down! Disperse!"

The teeming and glorious autumn wheat was full-grown in the fields and open country-side. In the midst of it each one of us had a heavy and lonely feeling oppressing the heart. It seemed that war was soon to break over it all.

I crouched among the wheat-stalks in a field waiting

for the order. The first sound of shooting would be the signal for us to charge. Unfortunately I had no rifle and, hampered by my wounded arm, how could I join in the

attack? This filled me with apprehension.

The blood rushed through my veins and my heart thudded. A great tension held every nerve. While I thought of the immediate sacrifice that would probably be my fate, I recalled once more my beloved Min, the unfading impression of whose personality I could never erase from my heart.

Our struggle for freedom is above every other thing, I reminded myself. If a sacrifice is unavoidable, I must obey the injunction of our supreme leader, the Generalissimo, "If a victory cannot be consummated, then consummate yourself as a perfect son of your country, and

die for her sake!"

As I was meditating this the order rang out again: "March on!" There was no incident whatever, and my powerful emotions once more subsided. Next morning we learnt that the alarm had been caused by a dog running through an open field; this had been mistaken for an enemy movement.

We completed our break-through of the enemy's socalled "line of encirclement" on the festival of Tuan Mu-"the Graceful Midday".1 According to our custom, it

¹ More often called "the Dragon Boat Festival". It takes place on the 5th day of the 5th moon, and commemorates a great poet of the fourth century B.C., Chu Yuan, who was supposed to have drowned himself on this day. It is said that his friends threw cakes and puddings into the lake to feed his hungry spirit, but that the food was intercepted by a "dragon" living beneath the water. They then wrapped their offerings in palm leaves and tied them with red silk thread to disguise them, and this kind of sweetmeat is still sold in China on the festival day. On this day, too, in the interior of the country, there are Dragon Boat races. Wooden boats carved in the shape of dragons compete with each other, to the noisy accompaniment of drums. Presumably this was intended to scare away the "real" dragons.

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was a celebration we all ought to keep, and we would now, in ordinary times, be cooking eggs and savouring the sweet tsung dumplings. For dinner we should have brought in some good wine and prepared a tasty meal that would have put us into high spirits. But this was a year in which our villages had been burnt down and wrecked by war. The peasants could hardly be expected to think of celebrations. By good luck we managed to buy several tens of catties of pork for our dinner. We cooked it all together in a huge pan and ate it with pancakes. For nearly a month we hadn't tasted the nice flavour of pork, but to-day we could eat to our hearts' content.

Being now within our own defensive positions, we could afford to breathe comfortably. We even had a sing-song of army choruses.

For a long time I had had no chance to wash my face. I suddenly remembered this and, having borrowed some soap from a fellow called Little Sung, I drew a barrel of water from the public well and washed myself lavishly. Many of my companions followed my example and fussed over their appearance to-day in quite an unusual manner. Some, not content with sousing themselves in one barrel of water, went to draw a second.

Having now passed the Wo and Meng area, we arrived presently at the town of "Great Harmony". Here the scene made a striking contrast with the desolation and deathly solitude of the battle zones. On the far side of the city, near the western wall-gate, wound a broad, sandy river, deep enough to carry sailing boats. Our advance troops had arranged a pontoon bridge from a chain of river boats.

The inhabitants squatted on both banks of the river and watched the busy scene. They murmured their admiration of us: "See what good discipline our Central Army keeps!" "Their weapons are pretty tough —

they'll beat the Jap devils all right!" "Those dirty beasts, how do they think they'll escape?" and so on. The sturdy determination of the people moved us deeply. Our troops, singing their military songs, passed over in one formation after another. The people watched until the last man had crossed, then they dispersed.

We arrived next at a town called Linchuan, and there we rested on a river dike outside the town walls. On the river were pleasure boats ready to provide teas, but they had very few customers — in point of fact, no customers at all! Some of our girl comrades in military uniform were washing their clothes on the river shore. At first we had not recognised them as girls, and only discovered it presently by noticing their long hair. When they saw we were talking about them, they smiled at us.

Our advance proceeded till we reached the eastern border of Honan province. The whole way it rained steadily, which greatly added to our hardships on the march. Under the heavy downpour we tramped on with a kind of slithering step. If one of the men happened to raise his feet a little higher than usual, he would be sure to splash the slime and water from his shoes on to the face of the one walking behind him. All our bodies and faces were so smeared with greyish mud that we looked like ghouls.

I had tied my shoes securely on to my feet, but the sticky mud had torn the soles off without my having noticed it. My toes and heels had come through my socks, too. It was really more comfortable now to walk barefoot.

We stayed for three days in a little place called "Ching Market". It was a very small market town and there was nothing we could buy there. Old shoes, already worn out by the peasants, were on sale at the high price of one Chinese dollar the pair.

I was assigned to a house which had formerly served as a small shop. The ground was spread with newly-

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harvested wheat straw which, though still damp, was more comfortable to sleep on than the bare ground. We collected up the straw into a heap and made a large soft bed, on which five or six of us slept with our heads so

closely together that we could hardly turn over.

For three days on end it continued to rain. There was nothing for us to do but eat and sleep. Salted duck eggs were very cheap here: five for ten cents. But very often the buyer would have no chance to enjoy them himself—his friends would pounce on them as soon as he brought them in. At last the whole duck-egg stock was exhausted, and we had to look for them in adjoining villages. There we had to pay ten cents for four, and even then were not sure of getting them. As for vegetables, cucumbers were extraordinarily cheap in the locality, but we could buy no seasonings. We had to boil the cucumbers in plain water and they simply had no taste at all.

There was also the problem of finding bowls and chopsticks, but we promptly solved it by using our fingers for chopsticks, and little tin cans or earthen jugs for bowls.

We were given sentry duty in turns during the night, to keep us awake and alert. Each of us was to go on guard for two hours, but as nobody possessed a watch, we made the rule that we should each stay on duty for the time a stick of incense took to burn down. The next man on had to light another incense-stick.

3

On June 20th we arrived at a station on the Ping-Han railway called "Bright Harbour". Divisional Head-quarters were set up in a village not far from the station, and I was summoned to work there.

It continued to rain day after day. Although now and then a flash of sunshine burst from the lowering clouds, active operations were very difficult. In the

neighbourhood of the station every single umbrella had already been sold out: there wasn't one to be had, no matter how much we were ready to pay.

There were public baths here. Our Commander made himself our host by renting the baths for three days on end exclusively for our use. I took baths there twice and had so much pleasure and comfort from it that after each time I felt as if I had been caressed by someone I loved!

By now we were able to send for food supplies from our rear, and new kitchens were opened in all sections of the Division. My companions and I borrowed an iron pot from our landlord and fried our pancakes in it. The landlord's old mother was delighted. She told us gleefully, "This is the first time my old iron pot has known such a huge quantity of vegetable oil. Since my wedding day, more than thirty years ago, I've never seen such a grand display!" So saying, she hurried to her larder and took out some vegetable soup and, having waited until we had finished frying our pancakes, she poured her soup into the iron pot, and bent over to pile some more grass on to the fire. Our life for the time being was more or less normal, and our living conditions much improved.

My wounded arm no longer gave me much pain, but if it were to remain crooked and never straighten properly it would indeed be distressing to me. I was still not convinced that the bullet had come out, and I wished to go to Hankow and have it examined in the hospital there. The hard lump, like a metal splinter, had never gone from the wound. I was given leave and the three months' salary still owing to me. This would be ample for me to enjoy myself for a short time in Hankow. And I wanted to see some of my old friends there. An army surgeon called Chu, of our Veterinary Section, was also going to Hankow to buy medical supplies, so we arranged to go together.

Chapter VII

On the Peking-Hankow Railway

I

AFTER we had waited till very late into the night, a sudden blaze of dazzling light, like a flash of lightning, swept towards us from a great distance and came slowly nearer, changing into the eye of a wild beast. "Here's the train! Here's the train! It's coming in!" shouted the people, and a mass of passengers surged forward like a swarm of bees and gathered on the very edge of the platform.

"Look out! Mind the train!" warned a station

official loudly, holding up a red lamp.

Even before the train had come to a standstill the anxious people had started clambering into the compartments. Each carriage was already crammed full with previous passengers, who had crowded into the first, second and third class compartments, and even into the lavatories. The luggage racks appeared to make comfortable beds for them.

The new passengers had to thrust themselves in with brute strength and, pinioned straight, like the shaft of a pen, put up with whatever discomfort came to them. Luckily we had no heavy luggage or small suitcases with us to worry about. It would be easy to lose one's belongings, and I felt constantly uneasy about my money — my precious three months' salary — in my pocket.

When we reached Hsinyang station many got off, and although many others came in, too, Chu and I managed to get a seat each. The town of Hsinyang had always been an important centre of communications, and in wartime it had an increased significance for strategic reasons.

Soldiers and civilians in the station worked busily all through the night, and one felt an atmosphere of extreme urgency. There were piles of ammunition stacked up on

the platform.

At this time of night there was little danger of air raids, but still the train waited interminably. A rumour got about that we were waiting to give right of way to the military trains moving north. The people grew impatient and began to clamour. In my carriage we started talking at random with one another.

"The wrecking of the Yellow river dikes," began one who had seen the flooding of "China's Sorrow",1 "has drowned heaps of these Jap devils. Their heavy guns and tanks simply stuck fast in the thick yellowish mud, and they couldn't budge them an inch. Those devils who bombed the river dikes to ruins, meaning to destroy others, were caught in their own trap. Wherever the yellow water ran," he went on, "cottages and trees were swept away. And men and cattle, if they began to lag behind a little, couldn't escape when the rushing current swirled after them. Their bodies would gradually sink into the thick mud, and the more they struggled the deeper they sank. They could do nothing but wait for death." At this, another soldier glared angrily and began to curse the "damned turtle's eggs", as he called the Japanese. From his accent I guessed he came from one of the North-eastern provinces, and that his home had long been under enemy occupation.

"But you know," I said, "war-weariness is spreading now through the Japanese army. They know that shiploads of them have been transported from their own country to China, and they've seen other shiploads of ashes being sent back to their homeland. In their factories

The Yellow river is often termed "China's Sorrow" because it frequently overflows its banks and drowns great numbers of peasants in the riverside villages.

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the deaf, the dumb and the deformed, and young women, are now taking the place of the young men. Tens of millions of dollars are being squandered every day in China on war expenditure. They are the flesh and blood of the Japanese masses, squeezed out by their war-lords and dissipated on the battle-grounds. And what have the Japanese people gained?

"The enemy war-lords loot the wealth from our territories which they occupy, and put it into their own pockets. They rob our girls and young women, force and rape them. They have done monstrous cruelties to our innocent civilians. But all these wrong-doings have been screened from the notice of the Japanese people by the propaganda of those spokesmen of the war-lords — the Japanese journalists. But their treachery will be discovered one day by the masses, who will rise in revolt. . . ."

While we were talking in this way, as if at a miniature political conference, the train began to move off, and the creaking of the wheels prevented our hearing one another. Some of the passengers were tired now. Chu stretched himself and yawned. I also had a feeling of numbness and discomfort. Under the lamp-light, as faint as the glow of fireflies, I yawned deeply again and again. I stood up to have a good stretch, then sat down again. The smoke from my cigarette curled and floated on the air like twining silks. My thoughts went far and wide, and I soon fell into melancholy reflections.

2

Wu-Sheng Kuan — "the Pass of War and Victory" — on the Ping-Han railway, is a famous historical spot which I had looked forward to seeing. Unfortunately our train passed through it by night, and I could see nothing but the outline of an ordinary-looking house picked out by the faint, dreary light of the station lamps.

After a short stop we moved on again, and not far out of the station we passed through a tunnel. This reminded me so much of my journey from Peking to the Nankou Pass, where after passing through such a tunnel the train comes out at the foot of the Great Wall on the muchadmired Pa-Ta Ling — "the Mountain of Eight Directions". Now Peking and Nankou have been trampled under the steely hoofs of enemy horses. In the bright, gracious spring days, and while the crimson leaves of the red maples are ablaze in the late autumn, only our enemy lingers by the ancient Wall and admires it. When the sinking sun pours out its last rays, how sad and lonely and desolate must those hills look around the old Wall!

Next day we arrived at Kuangshui station. The town had already been bombed several times and the houses were lying in ruins. In the station a young woman with her hair cut short in the modern style, and her clothes in good order, stood silently and stretched out her hands to the travellers without uttering a word, only looking at them with beseeching eyes. If you did not want to give her anything, she would not beg any more, but would go to some other passenger and simply stretch our her hand again without speaking.

We all took her to be a dumb girl, but one of the station officials knew her story. She was not dumb, he told us, but only too shy to speak. Before the outbreak of war she had been the daughter of a rich family, but now she had become a homeless beggar girl. Her comfortable home, her rich possessions and her beloved father had all been

destroyed by the war.

We also noticed an old man of about seventy, who during the war had lost all his property and become a refugee. With snow-white beard and hair and tottering steps, he was now quarrelling with a middle-aged beggar over some scraps of rice given to them by a passenger. Finally, in the course of the quarrel, the thin rice gruel

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was spilt on the platform, and the poor old man tried to save it by scraping it up from the ground.

Tragedies such as these were to be seen everywhere. In this great epoch of change men's hardships would

grow even more bitter and must be endured.

We had now passed over the borders of Hupei province. The train moved on over an endless plain. A whole world of bright-green and deep-blue rice fields, with young herdboys mounted on the backs of buffaloes, wide, conical bamboo-leaf hats on their heads, and brown raincoats of grass wrapped round their shoulders, formed an exquisite scene, as on an old Chinese painting.

This was the first time I had seen a South China buffalo. It is larger than the yellow ox of the North, and its two horns stretch straight up, unlike the horns of the yellow ox, which curl downwards. Some of the buffaloes were lying in ponds, with only their heads and huge horns above the water. I might have mistaken them for some water monsters had my fellow-passengers not told me what

they were!

Chu and I got down at a station called "Chu Family's Corner", because we had some business to do with the Rear Affairs Section of our Division, which was stationed in a village about three li away. We walked there over the embankments of the rice fields. The paths were winding and narrow, and one could easily slip into the deep mud of the watery fields.

I spent the night with Shu of the Military Tribunal, and at his quarters I changed out of my uniform into my western-style suit, which I had left in the office of the section. Now I no longer looked like a beggar. I bequeathed all my old dirty clothes to an orderly called

Sun.

Next morning Chu and I caught another train south. From here it was two or three hours' journey to Hankow.

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Chapter VIII

The Wu-han Cities in War-time

WE left the train at Hankow, at the station called "Great Wisdom Gate", and it was raining again. The French Settlement wasn't far away and we hoped to find an hotel there. As we proceeded the rain came on even heavier, and we had to plod about in it and ask, hotel by hotel, whether there was any room vacant. "All full up!" came the regular reply, till we grew really anxious. Luckily in the end we discovered, down a lonely lane, a small newly-opened inn. There were two small rooms vacant and we rented them at a charge of eighty cents a day. Now we felt we could breathe.

Having found a lodging we wanted something to eat. The rain had stopped now and we walked out from the little inn. Strolling leisurely through these city streets, I felt I had climbed into Paradise from the Eighteenth Gradation of Hell! It was a wonderful evening, full of grandeur, beauty and magic. Everything about us seemed to be gold and azure-green, splendid and gleaming. All was bright and glittering beyond description. On the pavements the heads of tens of thousands of pedestrians moved along like a broad, flowing river. It was beyond the power of the police to keep the traffic in order.

The light of many thousand electric bulbs glared against the piles of dark, lowering and rain-filled clouds. They were like beacon fires on the battle-field, burning the sky red. Over the entrances to shops, cinemas and department stores shone the five-coloured neon lights. Down the "Road of the Republic" they stretched in a

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long line out of sight, like a huge, dragon-shaped flame. Was I not walking in an avenue of Paradise? And should I not call myself a lucky man?

Later in the evening I wandered back to my hotel. The mosquitoes worried me so that I could not lie down. I seemed to have lost the desire for sleep. I was thinking over many things. . . .

2

On the advice of some friends, I intended to get treatment at the Hsieh Ho Hospital, which had better equipment than some of the others. I asked Chu to go with me, and we walked through one of the city parks in which was a museum of our war trophies. On an open space outside were the skeletons of several hundred enemy planes we had shot down. A little to the east of the park was the Hsieh Ho Hospital. We found a great queue of patients waiting there, and the whole place was so crowded that I didn't attempt to register but decided to return to the Municipal Hospital.

On the way back we passed through some dirty districts, largely inhabited by leather-dressers. In the humid, hot summer days the skins and hides gave off a dreadful stink, so that one nearly vomited. This was another sort of Hankow heaven!

The registration fee at the Municipal Hospital was only a matter of twenty cents. The doctor who examined me had the same opinion as our military surgeon, but I still couldn't persuade myself that this arm of mine would eventually come straight by itself. Then I had an X-ray, which showed that the bullet really had come out, and that the hard lump at the bend of my elbow was indeed caused by a blocking of the veins. The only means of straightening the arm quickly, said the doctor, would be by operation. He would then put it between two splints, and promised that, by so doing, my arm would be perfectly

healed in about two weeks' time. With my arm as it was, I was never hampered in my work, but in splints it might cause me great pain and inconvenience. I suddenly remembered a soldier from Kwangsi whom I had seen on my way from Taierchuang to Hsüchou. With his arm in wooden boards, he had looked a perfect picture of misery. This unfortunate recollection decided me to leave the arm alone.

3

I made it a habit while I was in Hankow to visit the book shops in "Communication Road". After careful selection I bought more than ten dollars' worth. I even went to the "Golden Star" Company for a fountain-pen with which to write my army diary. I wanted to buy a fairly cheap one, since it is easy enough to lose a pen when one is in the front line. I remembered my well-loved Parker, which I had bought in the Commerical Press stationery department at Shanghai during a sale, and which I had lost in the Hsüchou battle. I had paid a little more than twenty-three dollars for it, and I suppose in Hankow now it would cost as much as sixty or seventy dollars.

Conquered by the shop-girl's eloquence, and her persuasive, obliging manner, I found myself buying one of the least expensive of her stock. When I got outside, I couldn't understand what had possessed me to spend so

much money!

Although I had kept away from the cinemas, theatres and dance halls, I had not spared my purse at the restaurants and public baths. Especially I had been rather over-generous in buying sweets and cigarettes from refugees who sold them in the lounges of the baths. I benefited greatly from these baths, which cured the sores I had acquired at the front through living in damp places.

In Hankow I saw child refugees polishing the leather

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shoes of the passers-by. People were just sitting by the side-walk and having their boots polished by the children. I thought at first that these people were hard-hearted, but on second thoughts I realised that the very life of these little ones was only preserved by the payments of the leather-boot classes.¹

The population of the triple city of Wu-han 2 swelled from day to day. The uproar increased, and to take refuge from it I used to walk along the banks of the Yangtze river and enjoy the cool air. From the Hankow side I could see, beyond the opposite bank, the famous Turtle Hill of Wuchang, as well as the classic site of the Yellow Stork Pagoda,3 admired by so many for so long.

The powerful, swirling water of the great river journeyed eastward in wide and ponderous flood. I remembered that poem of our ancient poet, Su Tung-po,

describing the same scene :

The great river flows to the east.

Its waves have washed away the bodies of the brave for a thousand years.

On the western side of that ruined fortification,

Men say was the battle-ground of General Chou in the days of the "Three Kingdoms".

Now the storm was rising and overspreading the whole world. Although this picturesque scene laid out before us might charm our eyes and absorb our mind for a time, how could we forget our inward sorrow, when we let our

¹ Cotton shoes or straw sandals are common Chinese footwear. Leather shoes are only within the reach of the well-to-do.

² Wuchang, Hankow and Hanyang. Wuchang and Hanyang adjoin each other on the south bank of the Yangtze; Hankow is on the opposite shore.

This is a very old building with many historical and literary associations. In an old geographical book the story is told of a certain Fei Wen-wei who attained enlightenment and became an Immortal. He flew to Heaven riding a yellow stork, and on the way came to rest on top of the pagoda — hence the name.

thoughts stray into the ancient world and then remem-

bered the present?

The weather had been fine and bright for several days, and I spent most of my time strolling about in the town and had gone down nearly every street in the place. The more extravagant forms of entertainment were held in pagodas where singing and music filled the air, and in pavilions where dancing went on. There shone the pink glow of lanterns, and the wines were a delicate greenish colour. The shadows of the dancers skimmed past as if in flight, in time to the high and low notes of the music brought into harmony and charming to the ear. Some of our heroic veterans who had fought a hundred battles were here, tipsy or drunk, and lying in the embraces of prostitutes! I remembered how I had seen foreign sailors at Tsingtao on their summer holidays. They had been mad with gaiety, and danced half drunk. I excused them all because a fighting man will naturally try to feast on pleasure to the utmost while there is still time.

On the pavements I passed many groups of robust, vigorous-looking soldiers in uniform, while members of the Front Service Corps, the Singing Corps, the Drama Corps, the People's Reinforcements Society, and other war-time organisations, paraded through the streets. On the bookstalls there were magazines publishing pictures and descriptions of scenes at the front, and newspapers with reports of local victories. These showed another aspect of Hankow at war. Here, after all, we were not in

Paradise!

Chapter IX

Return from Hankow

WE returned to the Rear Affairs Section at "Chu Family's Corner", and from there I arranged with some companions to go first to the town of Hsinyang, and so by

car to the T'ungpo sector of the front.

When we began to drive northwards, we were again caught in the rain. This time we passed the Wu-Sheng Kuan — "the Pass of War and Victory" — in daylight. From the window of my car I looked through the rain at the commanding view of the Cock's Mountains that rose round us like an encircling rocky screen. The emeraldgreen forests which covered the entire mountain range were being washed by the summer rain, and not a single protruding or contorted rock marred the smooth contour of those fresh and austere purple-green and gracious mountain peaks. This kind of delicate and graceful mountain scenery is rarely seen among the ranges of North China. Looking down from our car into the precipitous valleys, we could pick out mountain streams far below like trickles of oil, so smooth, shining and deep green were their waters. Their glass-green ripples were quivering like the surface of fathomless seas.

When we arrived at Hsinyang the rain was beating down harder than ever. The car dropped us at a good distance from the railway station, and in trying to walk there we had positively to wade through the pools in the streets. At the back of the station one of our party found an hotel which would provide us with a very simple room.

All the near-by viaducts and bridges over the Hsint'ung road had collapsed through the torrents of water

that had rushed beneath them. When ordinary communications could be restored was beyond the imagination of the Car Company. It was a secret that Heaven alone knew.

We had received orders to go to the front, and could not delay long at Hsinyang. There were air raid warnings every day and we were anxious to be off. Once I was having lunch in a restaurant called "One Dragon", near the eastern gate of the walled city — a very dainty and clean little one-storey building — when suddenly the alarm bell sounded, just after we had ordered a number of dishes.

The waiters all rushed outside towards the open fields. We five sat unmoved, but a boy waiter came to us and urged us to hurry away so that he might shut up the restaurant. But we just sat there calmly, taking no notice whatever of the alarm. Planes were something we were well accustomed to. We told the boy we would look after his shop, but, encouraged by our indifference, he decided not to run away after all.

A "Danger "signal was given immediately afterwards, and a formation of nine enemy planes flew directly overhead. We were still not alarmed.

In the vast expanse of the sky the enemy bombers hovered like hawks, and our anti-aircraft guns, firing at them incessantly, were like the shot-guns of the game-keepers. Stick after stick of bombs exploded violently, rocking the clouds and roaring like deep claps of thunder. We could only surmise what heart-rending tragedy was taking place. In our imagination we saw wounded civilians lying prostrate in the open streets, and wrecked houses burning madly with leaping flames. Shadows of sorrow passed one after another across our minds like little films.

The bombing had lasted for more than an hour when the planes at last made off. The waiters all returned once the "All clear" had sounded. They told us that no

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significant damage had been done, and that most of the bombs had fallen in open fields somewhere near the station.

Meanwhile we had been waiting hungrily for a very long time, and now all the preparations had to start over again. We didn't get our lunch that day until 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

2

We heard that Divisional Headquarters were to be moved from T'ungpo either to the town of Fangcheng or Nanyang, we couldn't yet make certain which. So we had to change our original plan and go by train to Taho or Hsuchang first, and thence by car.

For two whole days we waited in the railway station at Hsinyang for a train going north, but all in vain. Luckily there was an army canteen there, provided by the People's Reinforcements Society, and we never lacked for free

supplies of tea.

One evening, when we had just finished supper, the steward of our hotel came to tell us that a military train going north had just arrived in the station. We hurriedly carried our baggage over. The platform was already crammed with waiting passengers, but as this was a troop-carrying train nobody was allowed on it without prearrangement. We had to suppress our rapture over the vain hope and settle down to wait once more. When dawn was almost breaking, a murmur began to pass through the crowd that a train had just stopped at the railway crossing and was about to move north.

There was no time to make sure whether this was a genuine report: we all rushed immediately with our belongings to where we supposed the train would be.

A train had indeed stopped a few hundred yards away from the platform and was already crowded with passengers. But no one could afford to hesitate: we all hurled our luggage into the iron trucks and, following

them, thrust our own bodies in by main force. In the vague and formless atmosphere of early dawn the train moved away from Hsinyang station, crawling on its way with the speed of an ox-wagon. At every station it stopped for one or two hours, and even sometimes for half a day.

One of the towns we passed through, Chuma T'ien -"the Horse-halting Inn" - had been bombed by the enemy a short time before. Numerous marks still remained to show what those devilish claws had ravished: we saw a mass of masonry now reduced to charred rubble, beneath which people were still digging for the bodies of the victims. A very tragic story has been reported about

this cruel raid.

A rich farmer had fled here from the front line, with a family of ten or so, old and young. They had brought with them more than twenty trunks and other baggage, and stopped at an inn. They had planned to go to Hankow by train, but were never able to get on one because of the size of their party and the bulkiness of their belongings. They imagined that this was a safe enough place, so they stopped on for over ten days. Neither they nor their landlord took any precautions when the air raid began.

The bombing caused many casualties among the civilians, and when the enemy planes had flown off it was discovered that this entire family, with the exception of one member, had been wiped out. The one to be spared was a little boy of less than ten who had been playing in the street. When the planes came over he had run with some other people to the open fields outside the town, and thus escaped. But when the child tried to return to his inn, he could no longer find it. In its place was a

huge, deep pit! Upon this the little boy had quite gone out of his mind, but there was nothing to be done for him. Later on he

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was brought, like other young refugees, to the government reception office. He simply couldn't believe that he should suddenly be transformed into a lonely and uncared-for orphan. No one who heard this tragic story could help clenching his teeth with hatred for the criminal, or wanting to clear with him this bloody debt!

3

The distance we could have covered on foot in a single day took us three days and two nights in the train. However, we arrived safely one afternoon at the station of Yencheng. We walked out of the station and found somewhere to sleep.

We had all spent too much money on the way, and everyone was in "economic straits" when we arrived here. By good luck Chang—one of our party—was wearing a gold ring, which he now slipped off his finger. It weighed a little more than two maces. He sold it, and thereby helped us all out.

Chang lent me half his new riches, and we could afford once more to have a good drink and a hearty meal. It was after ten at night when we returned to our hotel. There the porter came to tell us that he hadn't been able to hire a car for us anywhere, and this was such a blow that it almost spoilt our pleasure. We had no alternative but to hire some rickshas for the luggage and proceed on foot.

But friend Chang was very fat, and it was a hot summer: it really seemed impossible for him to walk the whole way — a matter of several hundred *li*. In the end we got over this difficulty by hiring another ricksha for Chang to travel in.

At dawn the following day we set out once more on our distant journey. Walking through the broad plain in the

fresh glow of the morning, we admired the thriving and abundant corn, bright green and full-eared. On the green blades drops of morning dew caught the sunlight and shone like bright, transparent pearls. The fresh, new air, pure and clean, that blew around us stimulated our breathing and instantly filled both heart and lungs with a cool and soothing feeling. It penetrated our very marrow, and imparted a sense of refreshment and joy that was beyond our power to express.

But before very long we found ourselves walking once more under the beating sun of a hot, damp summer noon. The sweat ran down our faces, and our clothes were soaked with it. We were experiencing another

phase in the life of man.

In all the unoccupied areas of the country the young villagers were being given military training. A training officer had been sent into each of the villages we now passed through, and they were giving instruction to groups of youths. The latter wore the short trousers of men who work in the fields, and they stood in an orderly, well-disciplined row. As they marched they exclaimed boldly, "One, two, three, four! . . ." Their eager and courageous spirit greatly added to our pleasure. Before long they would be organised into a new army, and would march to the front to beat the devils.

We arrived at the walled town of Wuyang when all the street lamps were already lit. Martial law had been declared here, and the town gates had been shut some hours ago. Luckily we managed to find shelter in a small grocer-shop outside the town, where we spent the night

on the floor.

4

Next morning, soon after we had left Wuyang, a drizzling rain started and changed presently to a heavy downpour. On reaching a village we came upon a small

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house, with a little grass-roofed stall outside it on which various fruits were laid out for sale. We went into the house for shelter, and a middle-aged peasant, apparently the owner, came forward to greet us, and proceeded to entertain us with the utmost courtesy.

The rain streamed down with increasing severity, and we wasted the whole day in meaningless chatter. By evening it was like a deluge outside the house, and we had to make some preparation for spending the night in the village.

Chang and I presently found an old, childless couple, both over sixty years of age, from whom we begged a sleeping-space, promising to leave early the next morning. The old man was just thinking over the proposal when the old lady broke in and vigorously turned it down.

Then I realised that she was nervous of us. She was really afraid, and thought we were like the soldiers of the old days of the war-lords, who freely looted civilian property. Many people still believed this, and would tremble on seeing a military uniform. So we changed the subject.

"How many sons has the venerable lady?" I asked deliberately.

"I've told you already, officer, I've no son!"

"Any daughters?"

"No daughters either. We adopted a son, but he's gone to join the army."

"He's in the army? Why, that's just like us!"

"Yes, yes! And it's six months now since we had any news of him. We keep a few acres of land which aren't enough to feed us and pay our daily expenses. People like us, without any children, we have to kill ourselves with work all the year round. My old man and I, we're unlucky. Fate has given us a hard life!" She was describing her hardships so that we should take pity on her and leave her in peace.

"Where is your adopted son stationed just now?"

I began again.

"He wrote us at the end of last year, officer, but I've forgotten where he posted the letter from. I only know he's gone to fight the Jap devils. He hasn't sent us a line for such a long time, and who knows when he'll come back to us?" She seemed to be deeply distressed, and the old man, inhaling the smoke from his long bamboo pipe,

sighed with real pain.

"I myself have no parents," I went on, "and you and your husband have reminded me of my sorrow. You've made me think of my dead parents - how much they loved and pitied me when I was a little boy. They wrapped me up in warm clothes when it was cold, and had doctors to attend me quickly if I was ill. But in this winter of war I suffered cruelly from the wind and snow, and in the humid summer I've had to march under the scorching sun. In drenching rain which overflowed the pools and turned the roads to quagmires I've had to plod on for tens of li, or even a hundred a day. I've been starving and numb with cold. If my own parents still lived, they would indeed be heartbroken to hear of all the hardships and sufferings their son is enduring. They would weep constantly." Now I could no longer hold back my tears.

On seeing my grief, and having heard my story, the old lady began rubbing her aged eyes with her hands, and her tear-drops fell, one by one, on to the ground.

Chang, who was a dark, fat man, wearing a pair of thick spectacles, was perched all this time on a small wooden stool, tapping his knees with his hands and sighing deeply. Then he said to the old lady:

"Now you can see what pitiful creatures we are! We've had no food all day, it's raining, and we can find

nowhere to sleep. . . ."

The old lady quickly asked us to stay with her. She

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even made us sleep on the soft bed in the best room. Her temper was quite changed: she was no longer hard and difficult as before. We had roused the common humanity in her!

Now she brought eggs for us that she had in store. In the country, fried eggs are the only food that can be prepared quickly. In a short time she had also baked us some pancakes, and we ate to our hearts' content. After the meal I offered her a dollar for her expenses, but she absolutely refused to take it. Next morning, when we were going, I left the dollar on her dining-room table, but she came after us and, having followed us for a long way, thrust the money back into my pocket. I loved her sincerity, and I still remember her with gratitude. . . .

5

When at length we reached Nanyang, we learnt that our Division was guarding the Tangho district. Army Headquarters were fifteen li from the walled town of Nanyang, in the neighbourhood of the "Sleeping Dragon Hill", where our great ancient statesman, Chu-ko Liang, had lived in retirement.1 At the present time Nanyang had become the centre of war activities on the Honan front. All the schools of the province, and the anti-Japanese societies, had been concentrated here. They were making a magnificent contribution to the war effort, and their strength was constantly increasing.

That night we slept in an open courtyard under some matting. It was cool and pleasant, free from mosquitoes and lice.

Prime Minister of the kingdom of Shu in the period when China was divided into three kingdoms (A.D. 220-280). A man of letters and an able statesman, he is perhaps the most famous figure in Chinese folklore. As a boy he lived at Nanyang, and showed such promise of a brilliant career that he was nicknamed by his friends "the Sleeping Dragon". Hence the name of the hill where his cottage was situated.

Chapter X

Marching to Anhwei

I

OUR Division had already been stationed at Tangho for a week when we arrived. Headquarters were in some school buildings in the Northern High Street. At the back of the house was a very large pond in which lotus flowers were in full bloom.

Old fat Li, one of the Staff secretaries, and Shu of the military court, invited me to dine with them. They declared that the local speciality — fried perch with sugar and vinegar — tasted excellent, and that they were having this dish prepared to welcome my arrival. But when the lunch was over, they refused to foot the bill, and insisted that they were my guests, their sole reason being that my

salary was larger than theirs!

At Tangho we had a chance to readjust and train our army. Our Political Department and the voluntary Field Service Corps worked with great energy — especially the latter. They posted up slogans, published wall newspapers, and exhibited all kinds of information and propaganda, either in writing or cartoons. They organised a training class for teachers in the local primary schools, and summoned the elders from villages and market towns in the neighbourhood to our Headquarters, where they talked with them individually. Their aim was to strengthen the faith of the local people in the final victory of our arms.

Girls working on the political side with us seemed to have forgotten all the former privileges of their sheltered home life. They endured as many hardships as any common soldier. Like us, they lived on pancakes and



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pickles, and slept on the ground on a pile of straw. They looked with contempt upon all those privileges that are traditionally assigned to the gentle sex. They dispensed with their long gowns and fur coats; and wore military uniforms just like the men, girdling their waists with a narrow leather belt. Their shoes were often so worn that their toes showed through. Rouge, face-powder, lip-stick, high-heeled shoes — all these modern fashions brought, in their eyes, only shame and humiliation to the women of the New China. Any woman who indulged in them must be oblivious to the sufferings of her country and fellow-men.

2

After we had spent nearly a month in training at Tangho, an order came from the central authorities that we were to march back to the Fifth War Zone. We were given a time-limit in which to reach the Ma-cheng district in the north of Hupei province. By forced marches we had to cover one hundred and ten li each night.

And so we returned to our old life of night marches. We were like the wild robbers of old romances who galloped through the leafy forests to the jangle of their harness bells, and whose ceaseless activity began with the yellowing dusk and ended with the dewy dawn. Occasionally we halted and squatted for a while by the roadside, but then we were so violently attacked by the mountain mosquitoes that we were obliged to get up and go on.

In the nights of bright moonlight, the dark-blue canopy set with inlays of moon and stars that shone with a pure, white light, formed a background to black and shadowy mountain peaks. These rose in gradations, one above the

other, like a massive, rocky fence.

Down rushed the mountain streams over winding and zigzag courses, swirling over smooth pebbles the size of hen eggs, and striking out a clear harmony in bubbling

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tones. The whirling torrents of the deep mountain gorges seemed to sing their welcome to our soldiers marching into battle!

Fireflies flitted wantonly up and down, and looked at times like tiny stars in the sky. They came to rest on the field embankments or by the roadside. Wherever one looked, hosts of them were dancing through the air and sparkling in the black night with ten thousand points of starry light. Now and then a distant flash from one of these insects would cheat us into believing we had seen a torch or a will-o'-the-wisp.

One morning, crystal-clear and bright, the early rays of the sun climbed over a mountain crest and shot their rosy light on to an ancient city wall. This was T'ungpo at last, and it lay immediately beneath us at the foot of our mountain road.

In the moat round the walled city, scarlet and purewhite lotus flowers were in bloom. They looked more fresh, gracious and lovely than ever, touched by the rosy light of the rising sun. The ancient wall and barren watch towers in the centre of that beautiful moat of lotuses pictured to the imagination an old man sinking intoxicatedly into the soft embrace of a young girl!

By day we spent half our time sleeping and eating, and when the night came we pushed continually towards our destination — Hsinyang. During these forced marches some of our men who had not fully recovered from their exhaustion involuntarily closed their heavy eyes and went walking on in their sleep. One night a fellow called Tsui was marching along half asleep when his foot strayed into the water-ditch by the roadside. He was rudely awakened from his dream to find that he was already half submerged in sticky mud. The sudden splash startled some of his comrades, who fished him out forthwith. They all burst out laughing to see him in such a plight — for all the world like a drowned chicken. All the same, many others

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still walked on with their eyes closed, neglecting the warning given by the unfortunate Tsui.

One of our halts was at a village called "Moon River Inn". Some of us sat down in a small restaurant there and took a bowl of rice congee. The waiter boy was all agog to tell us the story of the mountain land-slide and flood that had happened here only a fortnight before. On a dark and rainy night, the rising river had suddenly overflowed its banks and gradually swallowed up the near-by houses. Some of the villagers had climbed into the top branches of large trees.

The flood waters had begun to wave and billow wildly, like an ocean in storm. But within a day the whole torrent had ebbed away and vanished. At that time a strange story had gone about. It was rumoured that someone had seen, in the midst of the swirling river, a huge black column emerge and rise up to support the sky. According to the village elders, who talked over their own experiences, this column must have been a dragon who was fetching from Heaven the water with which to make the flood. What this "dragon" really looked like, however, no one could describe to us.

Later, Li the Fat told me that while our main army was marching from the town of "Bright Harbour" towards T'ungpo, and was just passing over the river Yu, it had suddenly begun to rain violently. The river rapidly swelled and rose to about ten feet. Two of our men had been swept off and disappeared without leaving a trace. Some of the more lively ones managed to clamber up into trees, and so escaped from disaster.

Now when we reached the Huai river and wanted to cross, we found that the huge bridge had collapsed and been carried away by the swollen waters. There were no boats to ferry us over. The water was up to a man's neck, so we waded across in a human chain, holding one another's hands.

Staff Officer Yang, nicknamed "the Doctor", was a rather short man, and he always carried a bamboo stick. As bad luck would have it, he walked straight into a sort of whirlpool and was swept off his feet. He struggled up again, having swallowed a good mouthful of water, but he quite forgot about the bamboo stick. As soon as he had landed safely ashore he remembered that in the hollow part at one end he had stored forty dollars in bank-notes! He was so vexed at the recollection that he even wanted to jump back into the water. But the bamboo was so light that it had already drifted with the current a long way downstream.

Yang had no one to blame but his own over-prudence. He had heard that in the southern parts of Honan province there were numerous robbers, and he was nervous lest he should lag behind the main body of our troops and be set upon. Now he had escaped the robbers, but instead he had made a present to the "Dragon King of the Waters"!

3

We were returning once more to Hsinyang. Before we reached the northern suburbs, we saw from some distance away a crowd of people with luggage on their backs and carrying bundles, pouring out of the city into the country-side in a ceaseless stream. I learnt that in the last few days Hsinyang had been heavily and repeatedly bombed. This lesson had taught the people to run into the open fields outside the walled city every morning after breakfast: they only returned home at sunset. . . .

The railway station at the east gate had been severely bombed many times. The small restaurant, "One Dragon", where I had often had meals during our first stay here, had been wiped out. Several large and deep

pits were now to be seen in its place.

Under the chaos of the ruined houses some human

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bodies were still buried. Every evening people resumed their work of digging them out. A middle-aged woman, bombed to death and crushed under a ruined wall, was lying with her stomach burst open, and from her womb appeared a plump, unborn baby. This is a picture which I shall never be able to wipe from my memory

After being stationed at Hsinyang for six or seven days,

we started off again on a rainy night.

4

At a village called "Five-mile Inn" on the road to Loshan, Adjutant Li, who was in charge of the horses, fell ill. He had contracted cholera, and was now lying helpless on a flat-topped wheelbarrow. On his aged face one could already read the anguished expression of a sick man about to die. He was unable to gasp out a single word. Only his parched lips were trembling slightly.

My friend Chang and I were sitting at a small eating-house by the roadside. We had ordered a pot of tea, but before we had time to drink it the wheelbarrow on which Li was being carried came up. We quickly produced a bottle of the medicine called "Ten drops" and poured a dose of it into his mouth. But it was quite useless. He was an old man drawing his last breath. His sight was still left to him, but he had lost all control of his limbs. He lay huddled and shrunken on his wheelbarrow. Once he made an attempt to struggle up, but couldn't raise his body any more. He gazed at me with a sorrowful and spiritless pair of eyes. White foam bubbled from his mouth. The two orderlies who attended him were now utterly distracted. It was quite plain that no medicine could have saved his life.

Our hearts surged with warm passion and sorrow. I grieved to see before me an aged friend about to part from

us for ever. But still, I couldn't help making a false smile and trying to encourage him.

Because the bumpy movement of the wheelbarrow might cause the dying man much extra suffering, I hastily hired four labourers for him. They placed him on a wooden door and hurried along with him. He might linger a short moment, until they had brought him to Loshan. This was about twenty li away, and when Chang and I arrived at Loshan we were told that Li had already said farewell to this world of men.

There was in the heart of this old gentleman the same ardour for fighting as in the young and strong. It was only a pity that now he wouldn't see the day of our final victory. His eternal regret would be buried for ever, together with his body, under a little heap of cool yellow earth, in alien ground!...

5

We now received orders from the War Ministry to advance towards the district of Liuan. In those nights of early autumn the pure and refreshing breeze skimmed over the hardened faces of our marching men like warm, soft hands, caressing them and offering endless consolation.

The pine forests sang low or soughed on a lingering note, like the murmur of waves. Every sound in the mountains and valleys seemed to sigh and echo mournfully. Such were my sober pleasures on our night marches.

Our vanguards, having reached Liuan, prepared to waylay enemy forces which they expected to advance from the west. Our main army was meanwhile stationed at the country town called "Yeh Family's Market". This little town prospered greatly after the establishment of our Headquarters. The fish market, for instance, in the morning would display about a thousand large fish!

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I was going there once with Li the Fat to buy fish, when we saw a young man and woman fashionably dressed walking towards us. They walked with their shoulders touching, and when the young woman glanced at the numerous turtles hanging up for sale, she touched her companion and pointed to them, with "Look! That's your picture!" The passers-by who heard the remark smiled to themselves. No one could guess whether these two were husband and wife, or only lovers.

In the main street at sunset time a poor girl who lived by singing would appear at the cross-roads. She played the hu-chin lute,² and sang in harmony with it. She had astonishing skill, and there was always a crowd of people standing to listen to her. Hers was a beautiful and

delicate voice.

Someone told us she had once been a famous and wealthy singer from Honan province. Ruined by the war, she had drifted into this small town, and had to keep herself alive by selling her songs in the streets.

6

One day, in the early morning, when I was taking some exercise outside the town, I came upon a small temple. It was built on a pond, like a lonely island in the middle of the sea. A small wooden bridge brought me to the temple, which was closely set with trees, quiet and calm.

I entered. In the shrine was the image of the Taoist angel Tung-pin, in his Taoist cloak. The glittering candles alight on the altar shone through the thin darkness of the dim room. Smoke from the incense-sticks

" "Turtle" in colloquial Chinese is the equivalent of " a cuckold".

² Literally this means "foreign lute", and it was probably introduced by Northern tribesmen in remote times. It is a primitive instrument, in principle like a violin, with only two stops, and it has a sound-box of hollow bamboo with a snake-skin bridge. It is still very popular in China as an accompaniment to the actors in the old-fashioned operas.

curled slowly upwards into the air. A sense of real mystery overhung the place!

By some uncanny influence I was quite carried away and, kneeling down on the grass cushion to invoke a blessing upon my beloved Min, I took up the bamboo divination slips and wished. Suddenly I heard an air raid alarm, and before I had time to make any move, the deafening drone of planes sounded immediately overhead. I had not the least fear, but continued to pray faithfully for Min.

For once in my life I had given way to superstition. I kept this action a strict secret from my comrades ever after, or I should never have heard the end of it.

That same morning I suddenly fell ill. I thought at first it might just be an effect of the weather, but I soon started a high fever and nearly lost consciousness. Doctor Tieh was asked to examine me, and he told me I had malaria.

Next morning I was in a cold sweat, and felt occasionally as though I had been thrown into an icy cave. Then in the afternoon my temperature rose, and I felt as if suspended in a cage above boiling water. I swooned repeatedly.

At this time malaria was widespread among our troops, and we had not enough medicine to treat it. All the quinine tablets were used up. And meanwhile the fighting grew in intensity from day to day. A regiment of Local Defence Volunteers, which had been sent up to meet the enemy's frontal attack, had retreated towards the flanks without orders. The enemy then fell suddenly upon the walled town of Liuan. Our regular troops fought tenaciously from street to street, but after two days and nights of hand-to-hand fighting we had to withdraw to the line of the Pi river, holding on to the Liu-Yeh motor road.

In the Taoist temples there are, near the altar, holders containing slips of bamboo, each inscribed with some cryptic message. The worshipper may select one at will.

Chapter XI

In the Mountains of "the Great Farewell"

LATE one night, towards mid-September, under a black and overcast sky, we began our advance towards the mountains of Ta-pieh - "the Great Farewell". Several sick men, I among them, followed behind the main army, plodding along in a struggling group. The whole military situation at the front was now utterly confused in my mind.

In the gloom of midnight, with not a single star in the sky, we stumbled up the uneven pathway, narrow and winding like a sheep's intestines. I jabbed my foot badly against a stone and hurt my toes. I was hungry and felt deadly faint. Imaginary points of light danced before

my eyes.

On one of the mountain peaks we took a short rest in a grass shed by the side of the pathway. Some of the men tumbled on to the hay-piled ground and immediately fell asleep, snoring stertorously like a chorus of thunder-claps.

By the time we had passed the "Peak of Peach Blossoms" the morning light began to dissipate the thick black clouds that covered the sky. The mountains stood out in a blurred and dim silhouette through the greenish

all-pervading mist.

In these parts there were only small mountain villages. The village of "Chen's Pavilion" where we now halted contained only two or three families, and we had to make do with old and tumble-down houses. Our orders were to defend the Ta-pieh mountains, and a series of heroic and bloody battles now unrolled once more, following up the fighting at Huai river and Taierchuang.

During the night we climbed on to a stretch of high tableland. From there we could pick out already the bonfires that had been lit and were blazing fiercely on the

plain near "Yeh Family's Market".

Our troops defending the point called "Mouth of the Stone Gate" had received orders to attack. The report now came through to our Headquarters of their successful recapture of a strategic village, and this threw our men into a state of wild elation. Next, the enemy made a detour and attacked the high peak called "Rich Damask". In order to make use of the Yeh-Shang road, he had first to capture this key point. Heavy and violent gun-fire continued day and night. The emerald-green mountains teeming with wild growth were burnt brown by the concentrated and withering fire of the guns, and were barely covered with wisps of dry, scorched grass. Shell splinters skimmed along the earth, and looked like drifting leaves swept up by the winds of autumn.

Enemy shock troops clambered recklessly up the mountain-side, while our grenades and machine-guns ceaselessly picked them out. Failing in their first attempt to take the peak by storm, they returned again fiercely to the attack. And their planes bombed us without respite. Bombs exploded on the rocks, and the flying splinters glanced off again in showers, pattering like raindrops on the leaves of the wood below us. This struggle for the peak of "Rich Damask" resulted in the annihilation of a complete enemy corps, but their reinforcements kept

moving up without intermission.

2

The battle slackened at last, and the violently agitated air grew calm. The local inhabitants went about their business as before.

For more than ten days we had not had a single grain

In the Mountains of "the Great Farewell"

of salt to eat. Now we began to taste a faint salty flavour in our food. We could only buy a few ounces at a time, and then at the high price of a dollar and a half the catty. Cigarettes also became exorbitant. The "Little Blue Sword" cigarettes were sold at fifty cents the packet of ten, and other small luxuries also rose to five or six times the

pre-war prices, if they could be procured at all.

Working in a small house during the hot hours of midday almost suffocated one, and at night one had to endure the tyranny of mosquitoes. All this distressed me very much, and I felt worse than a prisoner who has lost his freedom. From time to time I went to bathe in one of the mountain streams. The pure and cool splashing water and the thick green shade of the undergrowth, beneath which I took refuge from the sun, gave me an exquisite sensation of pleasure. If an air raid alarm sounded I didn't trouble to find any other shelter. One need have no fear that any bomb would drop into these densely-shaded streams deep in the mountains.

The battle went on sporadically. The enemy, having obviously suffered unexpected losses, relied chiefly upon his powerful long-range guns, and from time to time he opened a random fire upon our positions, as if he aimed at

razing the great mountain itself to the ground.

My fever also varied in intensity and never left me in peace. A constant unrest and discomfort depressed my spirit day after day. Sometimes when the blazing of heavy guns reached its height, the rattling of machineguns and the explosion of hand grenades joined in a hideous cacophony. Then came the drone of enemy planes above our roofs, with the continuous grind of their engines. All these noises now began to fill me with nausea.

I struggled to keep myself going, but I longed to escape into a bamboo grove and live in quiet like a hermit. All I could do was to leave things alone. Everyone has to

die sooner or later.

One night heavy fighting flared up again. The angry spattering of machine-guns added to the howl of the enemy's gun barrage. We hardly knew whether to be more excited or afraid, but at all events none of us could sleep.

In our landlord's rooms there was never a light at night: he and his family simply groped about in the dark. He told me they only lit a lamp on New Year's Eve, for reasons of economy! But that particular night I was very thirsty and, with my fever, I dared not drink cold, unboiled water. I had to fumble about in my kit-bag for some bits of candle-end. These I gave my landlord to light, and asked him to boil me some water. But really, with the continuous gun explosions, this might have been taken for New Year's Eve with its gorgeous fireworks, and well could my landlord have raised a light!

3

The enemy's plan of occupying the mountains had to be abandoned, after the greatest possible sacrifices and losses on his part. His anger was vented upon some Chinese traitors who had acted as guides, and more than a hundred of whom were shot by the Japanese devils, as the villagers told us afterwards.

Once the enemy prepared an attack in the direction of "Stone Gate" village, and was discovered by our artillery. Something like an entire regiment of them was concealed in the woods at the mountain-foot. Our heavy guns found their exact range and poured tens of shells into them, sending the devils scattering in all directions. Having sustained several blows of this sort, the edge of the enemy's impetus was blunted, and his gun barrage grew gradually weaker. Our positions were now taken up by a relieving force, and we were ordered to march once more.

In the Mountains of "the Great Farewell"

Unfortunately my fever had grown more acute in the last few days. Some of my friends thought of asking the Medical Section for a stretcher, but I was unwilling to increase the burden of my fellow-soldiers, and refused to allow it. So when we started off I marched with the army, struggling to keep myself up.

On that moonlit night of early autumn, encircled by huge and distant mountain shapes, thousands of men walked silently in the heart of a thousand peaks and gorges. I myself felt like a stray lamb following behind the main herd. The hardships a sick person must endure on such a journey would belittle those of the ancient travellers

in the difficult mountains of Shu.1

The thick grass grew up like tangled hair. Thorns barred our way. A little carelessness would send one tumbling into the deep streams in the gorges, whence, from a great distance, through gradations of darkness, gloom, depth and mystery, from a tangle of twisting vines and creepers, issued the clear music of foaming water. To look into those bottomless depths made one's very heart quake!

After a night of intense weariness, I drew from the rosy beams of the rising sun soft and affectionate consolation. The rocks and woods, shimmering in their crystalline web of morning dew, looked freshly washed and vividly green. The tall and stately mountain peaks, painted the blue o kingfishers' feathers, created in me a sense of union with Nature's loveliness and of boundless love for all her manifestations.

I leaned on a jutting rock and, overwhelmed by sensations, I forgot my fever and pains. I felt drawn towards some radiant and blissful future. In that instant

Shu (modern Szechwan) is such a wild and mountainous province that its hazards for travellers have become proverbial. Any rugged road is called, in Chinese, a "Shu road". An ancient ballad exists describing the hardships of travellers in Shu, and the subject has been imitated by many later poets.

the figure of Min appeared before me. Her black hair streamed out in the morning breeze, and from her cheeks peered a sweet, smiling dimple. Her eyes, behind which — partly concealed — I read the deepest affection, were gazing at me. I walked towards her in ecstasy, but as I moved she vanished. Gradually I came to my senses and remembered that we had been separated by this cruel war, and that four thousand li were now dividing us. The tears poured miserably down my cheeks, and a deadly hatred of our enemy was thereupon branded into the depths of my mind.

Chang, my companion, laughed and cursed at me. "You're crazy again!" he said. "Stop looking like a moon-calf! There's no lunatic asylum for you here!

Come along!"

I struggled once more to support my sick body, and after I had thrown an arm round old Chang's shoulders we strode along together. And although at times I felt desperately ill, with old Chang's support and care I managed to reach the village of "Yang's Pavilion" by the time the light began to pale.

The inhabitants had already fled, and we had great difficulty in getting any food. Ten or so political workers were despatched into the solitary valleys to find the refugee villagers and, with kind words, persuade them to

come back.

We had been stationed here for only two days when we again received orders to advance. Now my fever had grown more severe, and I had to give in and accept a stretcher. Deep in the night, when we started the march, a stretcher was sent up for me by the Medical Section. This was an entirely new experience.

More than ten patients had already gone on ahead, and I was the last of the stretcher cases. The bearers swung me up and walked on rapidly. Lying there, I felt light and as if soaring upwards, like those fairies in our



In the Mountains of "the Great Farewell"

legends who walked on air and rode on the clouds.

I shut my eyes tightly. I felt myself whirling without respite. A vague and wanton tide of thoughts — shadows and events from the past — swept suddenly into my memory and sunk again into oblivion, like foam that skims on the surface of a boundless sea.

Having pushed on for more than ten li, we had still not caught up with our companions. In the desolate, misty and endless wild mountains, the dense shade of the vegetation overhanging our path quite shut out the bright moon and the star-pricked sky. Tangled creepers and long vines hid the way before us. I felt dreadful, and the sorrowful emotions of one in his extremity bore down upon me.

Corporal Wang, who escorted my stretcher, came to ask if he might call a halt and resume the journey next morning. I agreed and sent him to find some place where we might shelter. We stopped in a farmyard below one of the mountain villages. I remained lying on my stretcher, and Corporal Wang directed the bearers to spread some rice straw over me as a protection from the slight chill of the autumn night, and also from the dampness of the cool dew.

We went on again as soon as day broke. On the way we snatched a few words from some passing troops. From their comments it appeared that the battle had flared up again, and that the violent storm of war might soon sweep down here and engulf us. A wild wind blew, and dust swirled into our eyes. It was a hard struggle to go on.

We stopped to rest in a broken-down thatched hut near a village. Some of our troops had set up their field telephone here, and our other stretcher cases were also staying in the same village. They had stopped on hearing that our divisional field hospital, formerly in the village of Sushanshih, had yesterday been moved elsewhere, and they had despatched someone to investigate. From

here it was about twenty li to Sushanshih.

My bearers carried me into this old hut made of mud and rice straw. The straw wall was decaying; large rents appeared in it through which savage winds blew and swept round the hut. Now I was ill, weak and wretched. I had none of my own kind beside me. A few soldiers, also gravely ill, were the only companions to offer me

sympathy.

A lonely and quiet old house was presently converted into a provisional nursing-home for us. A cold and sorrowful atmosphere hung about it. Believing that death was near, I began to think of the sorrows that life had brought me, and the agony that lay ahead. I thought longingly of the splendour in which our country had emerged in her fight for freedom, and how the light of victory was already beginning to shine. I feared that, like Adjutant Li, I should be buried for ever in alien soil, together with my eternal regrets, and that I should not see with my own eyes the consummation of our victory. I should fight no more to avenge the humiliation that our country had suffered.

My heart was weighed down with sad emotions, and my tears flowed without ceasing. I began to lose consciousness. My breath came feebly and my lips trembled. The dreadful shadow of death seemed to approach. My dying soul seemed to fly over the waters of the Pacific to revenge itself upon the island country of my enemy.

When I came round again, my mind was clear. I was streaming with hot sweat, and my whole body felt on fire as if boiling in an iron pot over the stove. Corporal Wang told me that in my delirium I continually murmured, "Oh, Min! Oh, Min!" I tried to evade his taunts by talking of other things.

The messenger who had been despatched to Sushanshih for news now returned with confirmation that our field hospital had been entirely removed the day before.

A Doctor Chen and an Adjutant Sun had remained there to interview newly arrived patients and be responsible for sending them to the rear. Upon hearing this we resumed

our journey to Sushanshih.

On our way we met several soldiers of another Division, and among them three or four girls in uniform. They were all mounted on horses, and seemed to have travelled a long way through winds and dust. They might have just come from the front line. Lying on my stretcher and looking up into the faces of those fighting girls, I felt ashamed to be seen by them in my present plight. I blushed and tried to cover my face. Meanwhile I was reminded of Min, now isolated in Shanghai, and hemmed in by enemy influences. If she could only escape to the interior she would be able, like these girls, to work for and dedicate herself to the country!

We arrived at Sushanshih after darkness had fallen. The little town had had its first bombing raid, and although all the bombs had fallen in the outskirts and in open ground, the inhabitants had fled to distant villages. It was deathly quiet on the long main street. Only a few escort soldiers waited at the door of a shop for the sick and

wounded to come up.

Although some of the gravely wounded had arrived only a moment before, they were instantly carried off on stretchers towards the rear hospital at Shangcheng. It was feared that they might already be too late, and that

the road would have been cut by the enemy.

A gravely wounded soldier lay in the patients' room. His pallid face was discernible by the light of a candle. He was drawing his last weak breaths between quivering lips. He was now absolutely void of any hope. All night long I had no sleep, but sat beside this soldier, doing what I could for him. Next morning we left that desolate and solitary town of Sushanshih, which was presently to suffer the tragic fate of becoming a battle-ground.

III

4

We had stopped at some place where only a few damaged houses were left standing, when Adjutant Sun and Doctor Chen came up with several of their soldier assistants, having finally closed down the hospital. They told us that the enemy had advanced along the Yehshang road to a village only fifteen *li* from Sushanshih. They also said that the dying man whom I had nursed had drawn his last breath soon after we left. Before we had time to exchange more words the roar of guns again came up with the wind.

At noon we reached the village called "Black Shoe River". The entire place was engulfed in the atmosphere of war. From some distance we could pick out numerous groups of our fighting men, resting under the shade of

trees outside the village.

The shops along the main street had long been closed down. The inhabitants had gone off too. All that remained were some mud and straw huts, large and small,

and they were completely empty.

Our gallant men, except those on patrol, were mostly asleep on the floors of these empty houses on little piles of straw or a few wooden planks. No doubt they were in need of rest after the tiring night march. And this very night they were going into the front line to intercept and attack the enemy. Were they rehearsing this fearful action in their dreams?

After another day's march we had still not reached our Divisional Headquarters, and again faced the difficulty of finding shelter for the night. Some of the larger villages along the motor road were already crowded out with troops. Only when the moon was rising over the eastern rim of the mountains were we able to find, in a lonely village, a solitary dwelling-house.

I gave the two soldiers who had carried my stretcher

four dollars. The corporal refused to accept it, but I insisted. Their food rations had also run out, so I bought from my landlady twenty cents' worth of rice and ten cents' worth of newly-dug potatoes and, giving her a tencent tip, begged her to cook this for us. I felt full after taking only a few mouthfuls of the thin congee.

Next afternoon we reached the village called "The Lower Inn", where our Headquarters had been established. I was sent to the divisional field hospital at another village — "The Upper Inn". It had not been properly equipped yet, and a number of sick and wounded

were sleeping on a pile of rice straw.

All my friends came to see me. They had been very concerned about me, they said, during the last two days' march, fearing that some unfortunate accident might have happened. Their sympathy and interest made me so thankful that I nearly cried.

My sickness grew worse from day to day. According to the doctor, it had developed into typhoid fever and, despite his reassuring words, I realised that my condition was becoming critical. I lost consciousness or lay in a troubled sleep the whole day long, while at night my mind was abnormally excited.

The moon's rays stole into my room. In the stillness of the deep night not a sound would be heard — except the snores of my soldier comrades in their sound and satisfying sleep. Innumerable stars in the never-ending night winked their eyes from a clear, dark-blue sky, as if showing their sympathy for me, a soldier on the march, lonely and ill. The whimpering music of a small, gushing river below the village brought me into a mood of unendurable homesickness! The dark and brooding shadows of the mountain ranges, rising in gradation, stood out under the glinting moonlight. On my bed I would begin to make an imaginary journey, and was momentarily happy, forgetting all my troubles. I imagined that in the depths of

those distant mountains there might be some hermits living in a forest. Could I visit them and ask them to instruct me about the attainment of immortality? But the wheel of time moves round ceaselessly, and that hermitage inhabited by scholars and men of good taste belonged already to past history. This was only my dream of a spiritual release, having grown desperately weary in my struggle between life and death.

5

After several injections by Doctor Li, the violence of my fever gradually abated. Each day I felt better, and presently, with the aid of a stick, I could even walk along

the field embankments in the open mountains.

The number of traders in this district greatly increased after our arrival. Children from neighbouring villages within a radius of some tens of li would patter here with their bamboo baskets to hawk peanuts, red potatoes, glutinous cakes and so on. Once a little girl brought in her basket four gorgeous persimmons, as large as the enamel bowls used by our soldiers. I bought them for a dollar. They really tasted so honied and sweet that the flavour didn't leave our mouths for a long time after. Compared with common persimmons, they were like Heaven to Earth! This was the first time I had seen such fruit in my life.

In the village some two or three new eating-houses were opened which sold boiled dumplings, fried batter fingers, pancakes and rice. This was the sort of food which we Northern Chinese particularly enjoyed. For the first time I tried here dumplings stuffed with turnip and pork. They seemed much more tasty than the ordinary dump-

In the past it was the habit of scholars, artists and philosophers, who for one reason or another disagreed with the current social or political order, to retire as hermits into the mountains, and to seek for wisdom in seclusion.



lings with spring leeks and other ingredients. . . .

The mid-autumn festival was approaching, and I began to long for the seasonable "moon cakes" with their various fillings: sweet bean or date butter, or crystal sugar, or the crisp fried ones. How heavenly it would be if I could have some now! I had become very gluttonous after my illness, like a little urchin of three years old. Luckily I had the chance to give an orderly a few dollars so that he might fetch me two catties of "moon cakes" from the town of Lihuang, where he had been despatched for general provisions. Impatiently I tore open the paper package he brought back, only to be miserably disappointed. These were no "moon cakes" with toothsome fillings, but only some very common-looking sweets and candies. My comrades, however, took these in very good part and, without waiting to ask me, shared them out and ate to their hearts' content, till not a piece was left.

When the festival day came round, Chief Adjutant Shen prepared a banquet for us at night with different sorts of wine, so that we might sit round and appreciate the beauty of the moon. Unluckily that night the moon was hidden from us by ragged floating clouds, and the fine festival for appreciating the full moon proved only a delusion. Those tattered clouds spoke of sadness in a time of distress, when all people, loving and beloved, were torn apart from one another.

The autumn sky seemed immeasurably distant, and the air soothed our faces. The mountainous country-side was lovely in its simple adornments of pine woods and bamboo groves. If their life had not been shaken by war, the country-people here would live as happily as the fairies of our folk-tales.

The 15th day of the 8th moon, when the autumn moon is full (our "harvest moon"). The full moon is taken for a symbol of completion, and the members of each family hope to come together for a banquet on that night.

I was now completely free of personal distresses, except that I still had a touch of weakness. Every morning when I got up I visited a beanery at the edge of the village and took two cents' worth of bean-curd jelly. Then I climbed some of the neighbouring peaks. Finally I took some slow running exercise, and only returned when I began to pant and sweat warmly. Then I felt life strong within me, and my spirit was at rest. It was a delicate form of pleasure, and one which city dwellers would hardly dream of.

The mistress of the bean-curd shop was in her fifties. She had some ulcers on her legs, with which she had infected her little daughter, then in her early teens. They were both much tortured, but had to struggle on with their work in order to keep themselves alive. I asked our Medical Section to let me have some ointments for them, and these effectively cured their ulcers. The old lady was full of gratitude and thanked me every morning she saw me — wanted to give me presents, and refused to take my money for the bean-curd jelly. Of course I insisted on paying her, for the ointments had cost me nothing. . . .

An entertainment party organised jointly by the provincial government of Anhwei, the local Kuomintang. Party members, and a group of professional people, came to visit our Headquarters. One dark night we organised a grand reception in their honour. Lamps, candles and torches lit up this ancient mountain village, and the night shone with the brightness of day. Formations of our fighting men assembled in an open space amid rice fields. A feeling of tense excitement spread through that vast mountain valley, and the roar of songs stirred up the air.

The meeting started. First Fang, vice-commander of the Division, delivered his speech of welcome. Then a representative of the entertainment party gave a talk. After this about twenty of our people, men and women,

sang and danced. A second representative delivered a speech, and another entertainment programme followed. In this way the meeting went on until 2 o'clock in the morning. The loud shouting of slogans, the clapping and cheering by the thousands of officers and men in our Division, and the echoes reverberating from the rocks, filled the air with clamorous sound. . . .

6

By now we had entered the first stage of guerrilla warfare, in place of our original battles for positions, and this kind of fighting went on continuously all along both sides of the motor road at the foot of the mountain ranges. We sent units of the various companies right into the enemy positions or into his rear. Their ambushes and night attacks were highly successful. We even opened a special exhibition room for our captured booty, and let the local villagers visit it freely. Among the gifts we collected from our generous enemy were some blood-stained flags, trench-mortars, tear-gas shells, steel helmets, pistols and an incalculable amount of other treasures. A particularly fine and ingenious military telescope our Headquarters kept for its own use.

Once some of our soldiers had set out for a guerrilla attack, and were just in time to catch six of the devils who had come to a certain village in search of food, and whose whereabouts were reported to our men by the villagers themselves. A squadron of us quickly encircled the tiny village of only five or six families. The devils concealed themselves in a mud-and-straw hut and resisted stubbornly. We shouted to them: "Comrades, surrender your arms! We treat prisoners well!" but since they couldn't understand our language, it was all in vain. Finally Squadron Leader Li crawled forward bravely and set the hut alight. Being made of straw, the whole hut

went up in fierce flames and was burnt to ashes. Six blackened enemy skeletons were found stretched on the ground, and these our men buried decently. The damaged rifles and a light machine-gun were brought back to Headquarters. Squadron Leader Li was rewarded with fifty dollars.

Once we waylaid three enemy lorries on the Yehshang road. Having wiped out the escorting enemy soldiers, we took prisoner a wounded Korean. We also seized a large quantity of tinned foods, bread, socks and towels, all of which we handed over to Headquarters. My share on that occasion was a tin of beef and some bread. My socks happened to be worn out, too, and I was very thankful to get a new pair, although those Japanese-made cotton affairs were not nearly so comfortable as our Chinese ones.

The captured Korean was sent to Headquarters after the wounds on his shoulder and stomach had been properly dressed. We stood all round him and asked many questions, but he understood nothing. He sat with bent head, silently meditating. On his languid and sorrowful face a mass of wrinkles bore witness to his endless hardships and sufferings. It seemed that many thousand fibres of sorrow had been interwoven in his mind.

Next day he was questioned by one of the men who could speak Japanese. We now learnt that he was only twenty-five years old, although, to judge by his pallid face, one would think he was nearing forty. He was a trader from Yinchuan, and he had parents living, as well as a wife and son. To his misfortune, he had been conscripted six months ago and sent to fight on Chinese soil. He had narrowly escaped death in the great battle for Hsüchou, but he had not dreamt of being taken prisoner here. In sorrowful and earnest tones he begged to be allowed to fight for the Chinese Republic. He had no wish to be released and to return to the enemy side, where he could

only live as a slave without a country. His dearest hope seemed to be that when the Chinese should win the final victory he would be able to return to his native soil and see his parents again, his wife and his child. Then it might be that Korea would be released from the yoke of Japanese imperialism and become a free and independent country.

My heart was stirred with a deep sympathy for that unhappy man, and with hatred and disgust for the enemy aggressor. The day will come when the Japanese will find themselves digging their own grave, and the brutal spirit of *Bushido* will be finally buried in the gloomy and

dark deposit of human history.

Unfortunately this young Korean, while on his way to the Army Headquarters, suddenly collapsed, probably from the loss of blood he had sustained when he was wounded, and the effort of walking in such a condition. He died before his brave ambition to fight the aggressors could be realised. Did his sad ghost return home and visit his parents, his wife and child, in their dreams at midnight by the dim lamp? And would it warm their hearts for a few moments?

7

Time moves on fast. It was again the festival of "Double Nine" — the ninth day of September. The autumnal mountains were ablaze with scarlet growth.

The story of this festival's origin concerns a gentleman who lived in the first century A.D. at the town of Shunan on the Kiangsi-Chekiang border. He is said to have made friends with a crazy hermit who was really an Immortal in disguise. One day the Immortal descended from his isolated hermitage and warned his friend to remove his family to a high mountain on the 9th day of the 9th moon, which he did. On his return at the end of the day he found that everybody in the town, except his near neighbours, had died of a sudden pestilence! Every year thenceforward, on the same day, he took his family and neighbours up a mountain to avoid any further calamity. Since then the Chinese have made the habit of taking picnics in the mountains on the "Double Ninth".

Maple leaves shone gloriously like damask silk and fell tumbling over the entire mountain. Although in the midst of savage war, we couldn't help noticing Nature's loveliness on such a beautiful day. For my part, I persuaded my old friend Chang to make a climbing excursion with me, as was the custom on this festival. We aimed at one of the highest peaks in the range, and determined to reach the summit. . . .

Sweet-voiced birds sang freely in the solitude deep in the mountain gorges. Wild beasts rushed and scampered among the dense and teeming growth of the woods. We felt like explorers venturing into some savage land to find curious treasures. We toiled on ardently towards our goal. I carried a pistol in one hand in case some defiant wild animal should suddenly spring out on us. Chang began to grow discouraged. It was hard for him to go on because of his fat, clumsy body, and he was panting fast. He begged me to stop where we were, saying that it would be at least another twenty li's climb to the peak, and then we should be unable to return by daylight. However, I brushed aside his excuses and insisted that we shouldn't stop until we had reached our goal. And so we climbed on in the darkness of the forest, which shut out all light from the sky and sun. We had to brush aside thickly growing thorns, vines and creepers to make a pathway.

At last we reached the highest peak of all, and our success seemed to hearten old Chang, despite his short-sightedness. Now we had collected beneath our gaze a thousand peaks and ten thousand valleys, all aglow with reddening maples and yellow chrysanthemum flowers in

full bloom.

But even here the unending beacon fires of war never faded from our sight, and we seemed to hear the cries of endless floods of men who had lost their homes, like a lost swan crying piteously in the sky! As I looked towards the

remote horizon from our high peak, I couldn't dispel my sorrowful emotions. Old Chang was homesick for his home town, now occupied by the enemy. He had left his old mother, his wife and children behind, and they must have been suffering all kinds of hardships. He was choked with sorrow and wept unconsciously. The tears were rolling down my cheeks too, but I tried to speak and soothe him. Could he know that, cut off as I was from any correspondence with Min, I felt as if I had been

separated from her for all eternity?

We returned to the lower reaches of the mountain and came upon a small hamlet. The cottagers saw us and stared at us as if we were some wealthy guests condescending to visit them. In a moment old and young rushed to encircle us, and greeted us very familiarly with many insignificant questions. Not until we asked them to boil us a can of hot water for lunch did they realise that their entertainment was incomplete. Someone then hurriedly went to boil some water for us, while others tried to invite us to share their meal. We thanked them but declined their courtesy. We took out the bread we had brought with us and invited them to join us.

In front of me I suddenly noticed a lovely countrywoman of about twenty years. She had a healthy-looking, graceful body and a pair of lively, intelligent eyes. She stood in front of me as if she wanted to speak, but she only

smiled with lips lightly pressed together.

"Sister-in-law," I began, breaking the silence, "will you sell me some eggs?" I was quite sincere, and had

no intention whatever of annoying her.

"I'm afraid not," she replied: "there isn't a single family here that keeps hens. But," she added, "I shall get you both some chestnuts to eat!" She went off and returned with a large bag of boiled chestnuts, all warm and steaming. They had quite a different flavour from the sugary fried chestnuts usually sold in the markets. I

offered her ten cents, but she refused to take anything from me. Finally I gave the money to the little boy she had with her, and thus made her a small reward.

On the way back I couldn't get that country girl with her beauty out of my mind. I asked Chang what sort of impression she had made upon him. Like myself, he had been quite astonished by her loveliness. Had such a chance meeting happened in normal times, we should have boasted to our friends that we had seen a fairy! I remembered the two lines of verse written by an ancient poet in admiration of the famous queen, Hsi Shih, who was once a simple washer-girl in the country-side:

What's her distinction above her mates when a poor girl? \
The world knew her rare beauty only when she was queen!

Hsi Shih was a washer-girl who lived near the beautiful West Lake at Hangchou at the period of the "Warring Nations" (479–221 B.C.). Her native land of Yüeh had been invaded and occupied by the army of Wu State, and the King of Yüeh made a vassal of the King of Wu. The former tried to demoralise his conqueror by every kind of luxury and pleasure, while he himself prepared vengeance. A Yüch minister called Fan was once passing the West Lake when he saw the beautiful Hsi Shih washing clothes by the lake-side. He carried her off, trained her in all the accomplishments and charms of a noble lady, and sent her to the King of Wu, who made her his queen. For some years Wu wantoned with his lady, and forgot to guard his conquests. Yüch attacked and overcame Wu, who lost his wife. The fate of the lovely Hsi Shih is uncertain, but the story goes that Minister Fan abandoned his position and eloped with her in a fishing-boat to an unknown destination.

Chapter XII

Guarding the Frontiers of Anhwei and Honan

I

THE war news became graver each day. Successive reports came that Canton had fallen and that we had abandoned the Wu-han towns. Our Army Corps was ordered to march to protect the western part of Anhwei province. It was an even more hazardous and important engagement than any we had embarked upon before.

At 7 o'clock on a bright, clear morning of mid-October, we started out. The mountain peaks rose one behind the other, high and blue. They were dotted with maples which, with their blood-red leaves, looked like the flowering fruit-trees of February and March. Our troops marched in regular formations, and as one looked down from the mountain-top one could scan those fighting men moving in sections like ants, and gushing endlessly from the mountain gorges. I was excited. Thanks to the aggressive enemy militarists who had set alight the boundless beacon-fires of war, I had been brought to this corner of our soil, where rivers and mountains were like an embroidery design on satin. From the hollow depths of the mountain valleys soared bold notes of singing. The ferocious cries of our stout-hearted men shook a hundred thousand mountain peaks!

We arrived at our destination, Tang Chia Hui, in the afternoon while there was still plenty of daylight. Outside the gate of an old fortress, Brigadier Huang waited to welcome his superior officer, the General Commanding the Division. As our formations arrived at the riverbank, the trumpets of the military band broke into a bold and lively tune, which spurred me to recover from the

tiredness of my heart and soul. Sorrow and undaunted resolution played upon my heart-strings, and somehow harmonised with the flourishes of those trumpets. . . .

2

Some days later reports came in of victorious operations by our army, which had advanced westwards and recaptured the towns of Shang and Ku. When the people of Tang Chia Hui heard this news, they were so excited that they danced like children in rapture. The restaurants began to hum with activity, for all the richer refugees went out to drink and celebrate. Some of them were packing up their luggage, ready to go back to their homes, which for months had been in enemy hands.

Now that the town of Shang had been retaken, huge quantities of goods of all sorts were pouring in here all day. Loads of turnips, cabbages and vermicelli, carried from shoulder-poles in swinging baskets, came streaming along the road. The smaller traders became very active, and I, who had not been accustomed to a rice diet, felt much benefited by the vermicelli, which I cooked for myself. It was quite impossible here to get the old wine of Shantung. But we tried some of the "dry white wine" made from kaoliang. In these days I very often asked some companions to join me and drink deep to the continuance of our victories.

It now became possible to export the native products of the "Great Farewell" mountains. Large quantities of China root 3 and meng-tzu 4 oil were transported to the outlying towns.

Meng-tzu oil is a commodity seldom found in other parts of China. The meng is a kind of huge tree, and in

The staple food of the Northern Chinese is a kind of unleavened bread, made from wheat flour.

A kind of millet.

³ I.e. pachyma cocos, a species of herb. 4 I.e. acacia oil.

Guarding the Frontiers of Anhwei and Honan

autumn when its leaves are falling it produces numerous seeds, white and rather like little beans, which grow tightly lodged on the twigs and branches. In winter, the country-people pull them off and press out the "oil", which eventually becomes a solid wax. Before the war this oil was chiefly marketed at Hankow, and it was used in making the best kind of candles. The people of the locality also used it for their lamps at night. Now that Hankow had fallen, large quantities of these native products were transported to the outer world by another route.

On the shores of the small river outside Tang Chia Hui, a kind of iron sand used to be collected, and this had previously formed one of the main products of the locality, but people were not working on it now. In "the Great Farewell" mountains themselves rice and firewood were cultivated, and the people were self-supporting. It was a country that Nature had enriched, and its fruitfulness had helped us immeasurably to maintain such a firm and stubborn resistance to the enemy in Anhwei province.

We had been given special instructions by the authorities to guard strictly against the import of poisoned salt. It was one form of the enemy's treachery to impregnate the salt grains with poison by some chemical process, and to import it into the zones protected by our army, where it would be sold to the troops. Anyone who took it would die within a month. This devilish and snaky device was particularly low and vile. Our method of detecting the poison was to fry a portion of salt in a pan for about ten minutes. Poisoned salt would then become black and give off a bad smell, while a pure, clean salt would not show any change.

Once we caught a trader in this poisoned salt. He lived in a village not far from ours. He was a poor and ignorant country fellow who, being unable to support himself, had been obliged to borrow from his neighbour a

sum of fifteen dollars, with which he had bought forty catties of the salt. He hoped to make enough profit out of the sale to keep himself alive. His case had been examined long and carefully; it was ultimately decided that he had bought the poisonous salt in error, and he was released upon the village elders' standing surety for his good conduct. The salt was confiscated and scattered into the dirty mud of a rice field, where it proved an excellent fertiliser for the young rice plants. Our unlucky countryman had lost his capital, and almost lost his life. I couldn't help feeling great sympathy for that man, who was a victim both of poverty and, indirectly, of our enemy.

Our troops having been assigned the difficult task of protecting Western Anhwei had all this time been dealing frequent blows at the enemy. Once we got a report that the enemy was again on the move and had advanced to a village south of our mountain sector. As soon as night fell, a corps of our shock troops marched out to make a contact. This corps, consisting of about a hundred men, reached their destination in the depths of night, and, having examined the nature of the terrain, and all the men having been assigned their special tasks, they charged with intrepid bravery into the village where the enemy, as usual, had lodged without sending out patrols. They - also about a hundred - were sleeping soundly, apparently without a thought of danger, and doubtless dreaming longingly of home. The attack proved such easy work that it was like our proverb "catching an imprisoned turtle in a jar"! A few of them evidently struggled to get away, like fish eluding the fisherman's net, towards their base camp, but most of them tamely gave themselves up. We carried off more than sixty prisoners, together with their equipment and ammunition.

Unfortunately, on the way, the prisoners refused to advance any farther. They tried to make trouble with us and played for time until their reinforcements should

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come up. We had anticipated this, but neither by entreaty nor threat could we induce them to go on, and the situation became really serious.

Presently we heard the spattering of machine-gun fire from some distance, and the commander of our unit was anxious in case this might mean the contact of our rearguard troops with the pursuing enemy. At such a moment he was in no position to consider his orders to "treat the prisoners well". He had to take resolute action. When he gave the word, our machine-gunners opened fire, and we rid ourselves of the encumbrance of the prisoners, leaving the troops free to deal with enemy reinforcements.

Before dawn broke, our soldiers were marching back triumphantly, gaily singing. The rest of our men, asleep in bed, thought it was the singing at our usual morning drill, but after breakfast heap upon heap of trophies were on view outside the guards' room. Only two of the party had been slightly wounded, and they were now lying gloriously in bed in our field hospital.

Another amusing incident took place when we heard that the enemy had transported in lorries from "Yeh Family's Market " a large quantity of rice and flour which he intended to barter with the villagers for vegetables and eggs. When this was reported to our guerrillas, they seized on the opportunity and, disguising themselves as ordinary villagers, brought vegetables and eggs to bargain with the enemy. The devils suspected nothing and took no precautions. But when they beckoned our disguised soldiers to approach with their load of foodstuffs, each man found himself with a Chinese pistol pointed at his breast! Not one of those thirty or forty Japanese and Korean troops had foreseen that such was to be the last moment of their lives. In the last lorry one of them managed to get away. Rushing like a wild wolf or a bear, he made off towards the mountain gorges. . . .

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Winter in this southern province was mild and warm, like early spring in my native place. The hills and open fields were always covered with green growth. The morning breeze rippled the surface of the deep pools.

Cassia-trees — in shape like some pines or cypresses — grew in our courtyard. It was a pity that the season when their scented flowers were in bloom had already passed. Mynah birds flew about in flocks, like the crows at home. I saw one alight on the back of a pig. The pig walked on unconcernedly while the mynah danced on its back. They looked like good old friends!

But the weather was turning colder, and our Supply Section was busy preparing cotton-padded uniforms for the troops. At first there was great difficulty in obtaining the material, but fortunately, in this part of the mountains, cotton and "native cloth" were actually woven. Our army agents succeeded in collecting bales of the stuff at the various centres they had established for buying.

But now another difficulty arose — the finding of tailors. Although in our village there were some two or three shops for making military uniforms, they were on a very small scale and could only take an occasional order. We were therefore obliged to have resort to the towns of Shang and Ku, and had managed to bring over here some twenty sewing-machines and thirty or forty tailors. In addition, we hired seventy or eighty women assistants. We then set up a tailoring establishment of our own in a village about twelve li away from Headquarters. Again, there were no dyers for the white "native cloth", but some members of our Staff devised a simple method. The cloth was boiled in cauldrons together with some earth from the rice fields: when it had been wrung out and dried, it had become light grey — a very useful protective colouring for winter battle-dress.

Time was too short to make tens of thousands of the uniforms with only twenty sewing-machines. It was then

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decided that the tailors should make the officers' uniforms, and only cut out the soldiers' garments. Each of the men would then be served with a ready-cut uniform, cotton stuffing and grey sewing thread, so that he could make his own. After this decision, the men of all our units sat down in the sun like flocks of women to do their needlework. They worked with lively enthusiasm, and within a week the whole Division was dressed in a new cotton-padded uniform.

Then came an overcast and gloomy day. A chilly wind sighed, and a cold rain hissed drearily. Our tumble-down thatched cottage shivered like a trembling old man, and from the eaves water poured down like unrestrained tears. In the depths of night, the wind, rushing through the pine woods, roared like an angry sea and howled mournfully. It often startled one out of an absorbing dream. My thoughts turned to the heavy burden I was helping to bear — the salvation of my country. It seemed that all the sufferings I now had to endure were the prepayment of a joyous future.

The severely cold weather lasted for several days. Heavy snow flew and danced in the air. An icy wind constantly burst through my leaky cottage. On the ground, in a little hollow lined with bricks, a charcoal fire would burn glowingly, and as we crouched round it for warmth we looked as if we were living in a jungle.

The morning after a night of snow showed us a thousand peaks and ten thousand valleys clad in pure-white cloaks, and all the trees in full bloom with little white flowers like threads of silk. Gazing at the snowy scenery, the dream I had dreamt the night before suddenly came back to me. I saw Min, a gallant and brave figure. I saw her standing a long way off at the guard's post in front of our Headquarters, on the snowy ground. With a fur cap on her head and wrapped in a sheep-skin coat, she shouldered a rifle with bayonet fixed and glittering, which dazzled

my eyes. I rushed hastily towards her, and on seeing me unexpectedly, her startled eyes slowly filled with tears. She took her rifle down from her shoulder and put her arms round me. We clasped each other tightly, each fearing that the other might escape once more. My warm lips kissed the wisps of hair on her forehead, and my tears dropped on to both her cheeks. Then I woke up and the scene vanished. But even now when I recall it, my mind and soul are carried away.

On another occasion I dreamt that she was studying at a school in Shanghai. My discovery of her sent me mad with rapture. But before we could tell each other all the bitterness of our longing during our separation, the sentry outside my window shouted tediously "Halt!" and the hoarse voice called me back from my tender and fragrant world of dreams. The pure, cold rays of the moon shone on the paper window beside my bed. The darkness in my room seemed troublous, thin and vague.

It was deep in the night.

From time to time I had some racing exercises with two of my companions on the Staff, and nearly every afternoon I went out to climb one of the mountains and only returned to my billet in the yellowing dusk. This kind of physical training I did with the intention of fitting myself for a guerrilla fighter in the enemy's rear. I had tramped over every mountain peak within a radius of ten li from Tang Chia Hui. Wherever I breasted a peak, and wherever the path twisted, I would come upon some new and lovely scene. Often I would bring some food with me and have a picnic among the mountains, not caring if the wind was chilly or the sun overcast. . . .

About two *li* away, to the south of the village called "Ho's Ancestors' Temple", there was a paper factory to which we often walked. It was built on the bank of a small river, and it had four wheels driven by water-power. Each of the wheels drove two huge hammers, which

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smashed to bits the lime-jellied bamboo sticks. This sediment was afterwards mixed with water and a kind of coarse yellow paper made from it. It was the kind of paper which the people of the locality made into banknotes of the next world, and burnt during the ceremony of sacrifice, offering and prayer. There were many such small paper factories in these mountainous districts, and the capital invested in them often amounted to more than one thousand dollars. It was only a pity that the method had not been improved, so that a finer kind of paper could be made. It was really a great material loss to us in fighting a war of this nature.

In the mountains there were many large, privately-owned ponds in which huge quantities of different kinds of fish were bred every year. Once a lieutenant of a Sappers' Battalion, in an impetuous mood, threw a hand grenade into a large, deep pond intending to blow up a few large fish. The grenade burst with a mighty explosion and, quite unexpectedly, an enormous turtle was frightened to the surface. Rearing up its head, it revealed above the water a neck five or six feet long, from which it gazed in all directions with wondering eyes and with a startled and dubious air, as if searching for something. We were all scared and fled. Was this turtle one of those powerful monsters described in our legends, we wondered? And would he really be able to raise a flood and create a chaos among us? . . .

The N.C.O.s' Training Class had graduated and closed before the arranged schedule. Principal Huang and Captain Tu prepared, after the general examination, for a farewell party, and all of us working at Divisional Headquarters were invited to join it. The Commander sent a gift of a large, fat pig, and at the dinner-table, amid enthusiastic cheers, large slabs of pork and great bowls of wine

¹ See note, page 17.

were served round, which made a bold and bohemian scene such as that gathering of heroes in the Hall of Assembly of the Righteous on the Liang Hills described in our ancient tales.

Sweets, cakes and peanuts had been laid in store for the night, and one of the village's vast, empty family temples became the scene of intense animation. In the building, as well as in the open fields all around, fighting songs were to be heard. A wild bonfire was lit on the top of a high mountain, and the blood-red glare out of the black night seemed like many fire-dragons flying high in the clouds!

Principal Huang appeared, and the graduates shouted that the meeting should begin. Only a few long benches could be provided, and these had been assigned to some of the senior officers. The graduates were grouped in small units. Some of them had brought bricks to use as stools, but these ice-cold bricks felt frozen like planks of steel beneath the sitters.

Principal Huang made a speech to open the meeting. He was followed by the Brigadier Chia and other high Staff officers, who talked about the general situation of the war and the tendencies and changes of international diplomacy. They all concluded with the assertion that the final victory would be ours. The graduates also had their questions to discuss, mainly about the guerrilla tactics we were to adopt when we should fight our way back to Shantung province. This very important meeting thus went on till the blood of each one of us became on fire. Unconsciously our united purpose crystallised into a steadfast determination for victory.

APPENDIX

Table of Military Events from the Fall of Chinan till the Evacuation of Hankow

I. THE GREATER HSÜCHOU PHASE

1938

Jan. 8. Fall of Chinan. Japanese advancing on Tsingtao.

,, 10. Fall of Tsingtao.

Iapanese advancing on Tenghsien: their

,, 18. Japanese advancing on Tenghsien; their right wing at Chinan meets with stiff resistance. A Japanese column from the south reaches the Linhuai Pass.

Feb. 3. Fall of Pengpu. Chinese counter-attack and lay siege to Chinan.

y, 3-17. Japanese try to cut off Kaifeng on the Lung-hai railway by a three-pronged advance: one of their northern columns pushing southwards along the Ping-Han (Peking-Hankow) railway, the other northern column along the Tsin-Pu (Tientsin-Pukow) railway, and their southern column striking northwards from Pengpu. Chinese guerrillas very active.

March 14-21. Fierce battle engaged along the Lung-hai railway, with the belligerent armies holding ground separated by the Grand Canal.

" 26. Chinese army advancing from its main base at Hsüchou recaptures Tsaochuang to the east.

", 27. Chinese reinforcements, composed of mechanised and air forces, arrive. Chinese forces cross the Grand Canal and recapture Hanchuang and Taierchuang.

,, 28. Chinese forces going over to the attack in Shantung (north) and Anhwei (south).

April 8. Big Chinese victory at Taierchuang. Danger to Hsüchou temporarily removed. Very severe fighting and heavy losses on both sides during the past three weeks.

,, 24. Japanese recapture Tsaochuang and begin a rapid advance.

May 4-19.

Japanese reinforcements from Manchuria streaming towards the front. Their northern army advances southwards; their southern army, based on Fengyang and Yungcheng, splits into two columns, which then advance in north-westerly and north-easterly directions. Their aim is to trap the Chinese garrison in the Hsüchou area comprising about 300,000 men, by cutting the Lung-hai railway east and west of the city. On May 4th the Tangshan bridge on the Lung-hai railway, 50 miles west of Hsüchou, is destroyed by Japanese bombing. On May 15th the Hsianchen station on the Lung-hai railway, 80 miles east of Hsüchou, is captured by Japanese from the north. On May 16th Japanese forces from north and south effect a junction at Tangshan and proceed against Hsüchou. The Chinese officially announce the evacuation of the city.

,, 19-27.

Rearguard battles in and around Hsüchou. On 19th and 20th fierce street fighting inside the city, finally occupied by the Japanese on the 20th. On the 27th a Chinese counterattack completes the destruction of the city.

,, 30.

In a counter-attack the Chinese take Lanfeng, 150 miles west of Hsüchou, slowing down the Japanese advance. The battle for Hsüchou concluded.

Appendix

II. THE HANKOW PHASE

The end of the battle for Hsüchou marked the beginning of the battle for Hankow. The Japanese intended to take Hankow from north and east. Their northern forces aimed at taking Chengchou, junction of the Lung-hai and Ping-Han railways, first. From Chengchou they would be able to push southwards along the Ping-Han railway. Their southern forces, based on Nanking and Wuhu and co-operating with their fleet, were to advance westwards up the Yangtze river.

- June 7. Two Japanese columns, one advancing along the Lung-hai railway, the other from the middle of the western border of Anhwei province, effect a junction and capture Kaifeng on the Lung-hai railway. They push to within ten miles of Chengchou.
 - " 13. Seizure of the Yangtze port of Anching by the Japanese fleet.
 - ,, 12-14. The stretch of Yellow river between Kaifeng and Chengchou in flood submerges all the villages east of the town.
 - ,, 15. The floods reach Yenling, 50 miles beyond the southern bank of the Yellow river.
 - " 16. 600 square miles between Shantung and Honan flooded. Military activities on the Lung-hai railway come to a standstill. The centre of fighting shifts to the Yangtze river approaches to Hankow. Japanese have completed their airfields at their Yangtze base of Wuhu.
- July 9. Japanese fleet crosses the Matang Boom.
- ,, 26. Japanese capture Kiukiang, 150 miles east of Hankow.
- August. Bitter fighting in the Yangtze valley, Japanese suffering heavy casualties, particularly at Juichang, below Kiukiang.
- September. Intense fighting continues. September 17th, Japanese take Wuhsueh. Two Japanese armies

now moving on Hankow: the army of the Yangtze valley (i.e. the Southern army) with the fleet drive westwards from Wuhsueh; the army of the Lung-hai railway, having failed to take Chengchou, pushes southwards from Honan, occupying Kuangchou, 120 miles north-east of Hankow, on September 19th.

- October 2. Japanese southern army and navy take Tienchiachen.
 - " 7. Japanese northern army cuts the Ping-Han railway at Hsinyang, 125 miles north of Hankow.
 - " 10. Two divisions of the Japanese southern army suffer a big reverse west of Tehan.
 - " 19. Japanese fleet reaches Huangshihkang, 50 miles below Hankow.
 - " 21. Japanese northern army pierces to Chinese line in Southern Honan; the fleet only 35 miles from Hankow.
 - " 25. The triple-city of Wu-han in flames. Japanese enter Hankow, 4 days after the occupation of Canton.
- November 1. Japanese forces also occupy Tehan. The battle of Hankow concluded.

THE END